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DEBATE ON THE ADDRESS

HC Deb 28 October 1948 vol 457 cc242-377

[THIRD DAY]

Order read for resuming Adjourned Debate on Question [26th October]: "That an humble Address be presented to His Majesty, as follows: " "Most Gracious Sovereign," "We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament."—[Mr. Bowden.]"

Question again proposed.

2.58 p.m.

Mr. Churchill (Woodford) The Debate on the Address, in reply to the King's Speech, has sometimes been called "The Grand Inquest of the Nation," and when we consider the Gracious Speech it is our duty to weigh and measure both what it contains and what it omits. This is, on the whole, a well-written document which Ministers have submitted to His Majesty, and it comprises a mixture of routine statements, about which there is much agreement, and of controversial assertions which we on this side cannot endorse. I shall endeavour to deal with these, and with the important issues which they affect, to the best of my ability, and mainly in the order in which they are presented to us in the Gracious Speech.

In the first place, we are confronted with various constitutional issues which have been brought before us in language of suitable decorum and marked reserve. The Statute of Westminster decided to sweep away all formal constitutional safeguards, which seemed to cramp the freedom and independence of the great self-governing Dominions, and to rely for the unity and cohesion of the British Empire solely upon the link of the Crown which joined us all. Now we are asked, with some evident hesitation, to consider the abandonment of that sole remaining symbol and legal foundation of the British Empire.

For some years the tendency of Socialist and Left-Wing forces has been to gird at the word "Empire" and to espouse the word "Commonwealth"—because Oliver Cromwell cut off King Charles' head and all that and also, I suppose because the word "Common, wealth" seems to have in it some association with or suggestion of the abolition of private property and the communal ownership of all forms of wealth. This mood is encouraged by the race of degenerate intellectuals of whom our island has produced during several generations an unfailing succession—these very high intellectual persons who, when they wake up every morning, have looked around upon the British inheritance, whatever it was, to see what they could find to demolish, to undermine or to cast away. It now appears that the word "Empire" is taboo:

"Oh no! we never mention it;" "Its name is never heard." Flushed with electoral success beyond their dreams—[Interruption.]—enjoy it while you may—the Socialist Government have proceeded further. One must notice in the Gracious Speech, and in other utterances on which Ministers have lately advised the King the calculated omission of three words which have hitherto claimed many loyalties and much agreement. The first word I have mentioned already is the word "Empire"; the second is "Dominion," and the third, of course, is "British." There are—I do not

want to put it too highly—large, long-established and well-recognised conceptions associated with all these words. Apparently, the Socialist Government wish to direct us into channels where these words will be heard no more, or as little as possible. The style and title which we are to give to our world-wide association of States and communities must not contain anything that recalls past tradition. It must contain nothing that embodies pride of race or country; it must contain nothing which could be deemed controversial, nothing that could offend the weakest of the weaker brethren in our slowly-formed association throughout the globe.

Indeed, I wonder myself that the word "Commonwealth" should satisfy the requirements of Socialist statesmanship. If all these exclusions and inhibitions are to be enforced it would seem only logical to adopt some completely loose and meaningless term such as was suggested some years ago, ironically, by an amusing journalist, Mr. Nathaniel Gubbins, when he pictured the world after the war being divided into groups—"Population Group No. 6" or "Population Group No. 7." That, at any rate, would achieve what appears to be the ideal of the Socialist Government in respect of the British Empire of committing nobody to anything at any time in any way.

It is argued that no one could be offended by terms so general as to be meaningless, and there is something in that, but, on the other hand, it must be remembered that no one could be powerfully inspired to lay down their lives for the common cause in the hour of mortal danger when that common cause and association cannot be expressed in words which carry any intelligible meaning to any human being. The word "Empire" is to be suppressed. "Dominion," for some strange reason, is judged peccant and unwholesome, and now, on the morrow of our greatest victory and service to mankind, we come to the elimination of the word "British," which was so lately held in the highest honour in many lands. Mr. St. Laurent, the Canadian Acting Prime Minister, is reported to have said—I read the newspapers to guide me in these matters—on arrival in Ottawa: "Britain dropped 'British' in the Commonwealth title of her own free will. It just occurred as a matter of course." I am sure, Sir, that such grave constitutional changes ought not to be effected in this way, and I do not wonder that this project has excited widespread concern, especially in Australia and New Zealand. The Prime Minister assured us all on Tuesday that no decision had been taken about legislation affecting the King's title. Certainly none is before us in the present Speech. Until such legislation has been introduced and passed through both Houses of Parliament, Ministers have no right to put into the King's Speech words which are contrary to the facts and to the constitutional position. For instance, in the Gracious Speech the King is made to say: "The peoples of My Commonwealth." That is not a constitutional expression, nor is it in accordance with the facts as they exist today. Great Britain is not a Commonwealth but a Kingdom—the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Canada has long proudly called herself "The Dominion of Canada." But the word "Dominion," it now appears, is to follow "Empire" into desuetude. We have not yet heard what will be the reactions of Canada to this suggestion.

The term "Commonwealth" does not apply to any of the Colonies of the British Empire, all of which, without exception, stood by us so loyally in the darkest days. Therefore, to limit the description of our association to the "Commonwealth"—"My Commonwealth"—to do that is to fail to make any correspondence with the actual existing facts, leaving quite apart the impropriety of such changes being introduced in this way. If constitutional titles and names are to be changed let His Majesty's Government make formal and positive proposals to Parliament. We will consider them. I will make it clear, however, that the Conservative Party will resist any attempt to destroy the expression "British Empire" or to abandon the constitutional term "Dominion," or to abolish the word "British" from our collective designation.

In the meanwhile, pending the Government's bringing forward some proposals, there would be no harm in adhering to the comprehensive expression which, though it has no constitutional authority, has become one of common usage, namely, the "British Empire and Commonwealth of Nations." I venture to suggest that, as a means of carrying on until the Government have made up their minds what we are to be called or are to call ourselves. All good Socialists, I understand, however, are expected henceforward to abstain as much as they possibly can from using the words,

hitherto held in so much honour, "Empire," "Dominion," and "British." No penalties I gather—I hope I am right—are at present to be attached to any infraction of this rule. It is not an addition to the thousands of new crimes for which fines and imprisonment may be imposed. Orthodox Socialists will, however, practise, and are urged to practise, this suppression for the sake of enabling Mr. Costello and Pandit Nehru to participate to the full, if they choose to, in any benefits and securities of our association, without committing themselves to the slightest obligation or even to any symbolic or sentimental gesture or token in return.

This practice, if developed, may well become an additional distinction between the parties in the State, a distinction between those to whom the word "British" is distasteful and those among whom it is still held in honour. It seems to me that the First Lord of the Admiralty, to take a small instance, will be in a difficult position because, as everyone knows, he is invariably saluted on official occasions in the Navy by the tune "Rule, Britannia," which obviously expresses and arouses all kinds of sentiments which every right-minded Socialist is expected to abhor. For our part I hope we shall still feel free to sing "Rule, Britannia" at Conservative meetings throughout the country and thus make it simple for people to show how they feel in these matters.

We must not, however, regard the present abject mood as one which will necessarily long dominate all the peoples now within the circle of the Crown. It may well be that in a couple of years another Empire Conference will take an entirely different view. Even this one was not united on the subject. At present there are not many Conservative Prime Ministers in the British Empire but it may be that this proportion will be reversed in the near future and that a more robust spirit will prevail. I leave this question of title and terminology and come to the march of events which is taking place under all this froth and spume.

Some of the important elements which, a few years ago, formed the British Empire are falling away like autumn leaves, over wide areas in many parts of the globe. It is a fashionable mood in these areas to sever connections with the Crown and to retain only such association with this island as carries with it material advantage. Take first the case of Southern Ireland or Eire. I must confess that I was astonished to learn some weeks ago of Mr. Costello's decision to sever the last link with the Crown which even Mr. de Valera had deemed it necessary to preserve. I have for many years held a consistent view about Ireland. I expressed it nearly a quarter of a century ago, in 1925 or 1926, when I was invited, as Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer, to address the Ulster Unionists in Belfast. Perhaps I may read for a moment what I then said: "I have declared again and again that neither by threats, or violence, or by intrigue nor yet by unfair economic pressure shall the people of Ulster be compelled against their wish to sever the ties which bind them to the United Kingdom or be forced, unless by their own free and unfettered choice, to join another system of Government." I was therefore glad to hear the answer which the Prime Minister has just given to my right hon. Friend and to show that in this matter at any rate there is no difference between us. On that occasion, a quarter of a century ago, in the Ulster Hall, I added the following: "I may cherish the hope that some day all Ireland will be loyal, will be loyal because it is free, will be united because it is loyal, and will be united within itself and united to the British Empire." Strange as it may seem, I still cherish that dream.

I shall always hope that some day there will be a united Ireland, but at the same time, that Ulster or the Northern Counties will never be compelled against their wishes to enter a Dublin Parliament. They should be courted. They should not be raped. As the Minister responsible for carrying out the Cabinet decisions embodied in the Irish Treaty of 1921 I have watched with contentment and pleasure the orderly, Christian society, with a grace and culture of its own and a flash of sport thrown in, which this quarter of a century has seen built up in Southern Ireland, in spite of many gloomy predictions.

I well know the grievous injury which Southern Irish neutrality and the denial of the Southern Irish ports inflicted upon us in the recent war, but I always adhered to the policy that nothing, save British existence and survival, should lead us to regain those ports by force of arms, because we had already given them up.

In the end we got through without this step. I rejoice that no new blood was shed between the British and Irish peoples. I shall never forget—none of us can ever forget—the superb gallantry of the scores of thousands of Southern Irishmen who fought as volunteers in the British Army, and of the famous Victoria Crosses which eight of them gained by their outstanding valour. If ever I feel a bitter feeling rising in me in my heart about the Irish the hands of heroes like Finucane seem to stretch out to soothe it away.

Moreover, since the war, great antagonisms have grown up in this world against Communist tyranny and Soviet aggression. These have made new ties of unity of thought and of sympathy between the Irish and the British peoples, and indeed throughout the British Islands, and they deeply stir Irish feelings. The Catholic Church has ranged itself among the defenders and champions of the liberty and the dignity of the individual. It seemed to me that the passage of time might lead to the unity of Ireland itself in the only way in which that unity can be achieved, namely, by a union of Irish hearts.

There can, of course, be no question of coercing Ulster, but if she were wooed and won of her own free will and consent I, personally, would regard such an event as a blessing for the whole of the British Empire and also for the civilised world. It was indeed strange and, if I may say so, characteristically Irish that this moment above all others should be selected by the Dublin Government for breaking that last tenuous connection with the Crown and proclaiming themselves a foreign republic. This decision may well prevent for ever that united Ireland, the dream of which is cherished by so many ardent Irish patriots. In this way Mr. Costello and his colleagues have constituted themselves the authors of permanent partition. It is they who have digged a gulf between Southern and Northern Ireland deeper than ever before. They have made a gulf which is unbridgeable except by physical force, the use of which I regret to see Mr. de Valera in his latest speeches does not exclude.

We cannot tell at what point our present decline will stop, but I cannot conceive it within the bounds of possibility that any British Parliament would drive the people of Ulster out of the United Kingdom and force them to become the citizens of a foreign State against their will. So far as we can tell from the newspapers, from the Prime Minister's reply on Tuesday and his answer just given to my right hon. Friend across the Floor of the House, the Socialist Government seem to have acted rightly in bringing home to the Dublin Government the many serious injuries they would inflict upon themselves and upon Irishmen in this country and in many parts of the world by forcing us to regard them legally as foreigners and aliens.

It would be a great mistake, as well as being very wrong, for any British Government to brush aside the natural juridical consequences that must follow such a decision by the Dublin Cabinet. The matter would not stop at Southern Ireland alone. Nothing could be a greater encouragement to Dr. Malan to sever all ties between South Africa and Great Britain than to make it clear that, while every form of symbolic association might be destroyed, no practical inconveniences would result. Therefore, I trust His Majesty's Government will act in strict accordance with the policy which they have so far declared.

I now turn to more distant spheres where the same theme differently expressed, must be pursued. In three and a half years of office the Socialist Government have with strange ardour and relish carried the world-famed British Empire in the East from life into history. Burma has swiftly passed as a foreign power into the anarchy of which I warned the House only a year and a half ago. Bloodshed, murder and disintegration ride triumphant over that unhappy land for whose liberation from Japanese conquest we so lately gave so much British blood and treasure.

The fate of India, now that British guidance and control have been so suddenly and rapidly withdrawn, hangs heavy over the future of 400 millions of human beings. An awful tragedy has already occurred. At least 400,000 men and women have slaughtered each other in the Punjab alone. Many good judges place the figure far higher. But the massacre by bloody violence of 400,000 human beings is a horror at which, in any other but this stunned and bewildered age, the whole civilised world would have stood aghast.

Four hundred thousand human lives—more than the whole loss suffered by the British Empire in nearly six years of world war; 400,000 human lives have been blotted out untimely. Many millions more are fugitives, wanderers, or exiles from their place of birth. It is strange that this Parliament, which so recently was shuddering at the infliction of the death penalty upon one or two of the most atrocious murderers, should be able to watch with so much detachment and cool composure and short memories this frightful holocaust for which the majority of this House and the Ministers in power bear so grave and intimate a responsibility. We can only be thankful that no such catastrophe or anything which approached one-twentieth part of its magnitude, fell upon the helpless Indian people during the long years when they dwelt in peace and safety under the British Raj and the Imperial Crown and, may I say, under the constant, vigilant, and humane supervision of the House of Commons.

Mr. Scollan (Renfrew, Western) What about the Indian famine?

Mr. Churchill Famine? I am talking about bloody violence.

Mr. Scollan What about the Indian famine for which the Tory Governments of the past were responsible?

Mr. Churchill We do not know what famines will occur in the future, but certainly during British rule the Indian population in the last 50 years increased by 100 million. It does not seem that the starvation process has at any rate prevented that augmentation. But this is not the end nor even, I fear, the end of the beginning. The Indian sub-continent, as big as Europe, which for almost 100 years had been freer from internal bloodshed and violence than any other equal part of the earth's expanse and population, is facing problems now which are loaded with immeasurable peril and perplexity. Hitherto they have been protected from foreign aggression by the strong shield of our island power. Our policy, our influence among the nations, our modest military Forces, our latent strength and that of the Empire and, of course, the Royal Navy, have protected India from foreign invasion.

Now this protection can no longer be given in any effective form. There is always the United Nations organisation, but it is still struggling for life and torn with dissension. Moreover, in India the causes and signs of a future internal war are already alive, and its portents multiply as the months pass by. Our Imperial mission in India is at an end—we must recognise that. Some day justice will be done by world opinion to our record there, but the chapter is closed. "The Moving Finger writes; and. having writ," "Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit" "Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line," "Nor all your Tears blot out a Word of it." We must look forward. It is our duty, whatever part we have taken in the past, to hope and pray for the well-being and happiness of all the peoples of India, of whatever race, religion, social condition or historic character they may be. We must wish them all well and do what we can to help them on their road. Sorrow may lie in our hearts but bitterness and malice must be purged from them, and in our future more remote relations with India we must rise above all prejudice and partiality—

Mr. Alpass (Thornbury) Why not practise it?

Mr. Churchill—and not allow our vision to be clouded by memories of glories that are gone for ever. And in this temper we shall find true guidance—and, indeed, our only hope—in strict and faithful adherence to the underlying principles of justice and freedom which are embodied in the United Nations organisation, and for the maintenance of which that instrument of world government was consciously created.

It is those principles, and those principles alone, which must govern our attitude and action towards this vast branch of toiling and suffering humanity. We have long had no interest in India which counted for more with us than the well-being and peace of its peoples. So far as we may be involved in the fortunes of the Indian peoples, and of the Governments of Pakistan and Hindustan, we must judge them, not by race or religion, but impartially, by their future conduct to one another in accordance with the principles of the United Nations organisation under the Charter of human liberties which is being drawn up, and we must use our influence, such as it may be, against aggression,

oppression and tyranny, from whatever quarter it comes. These principles alone must rule our actions, must enable us to steer our course in the incalculable tides on which we and our Indian fellow-subjects are now embarked.

It is for such reasons and in accordance with such principles, and not for any preference for Moslem or Hindu, that I have deplored and condemned the violent arbitrary act of aggression which, without any plebiscite, has engulfed the ancient State of Hyderabad; and, secondly, I deplored the attempt now being made to incorporate forcibly, against their wishes, the Moslem population of Kashmir in the Hindu regime. Other cases may arise in the future, and in all of them the only path of honour and duty will be for the British people, through the House of Commons, to act in accordance with the principles enshrined in the United Nations organisation, and wherever possible, through its structure and through whatever strength it may gather.

I regard these considerations as on a different plane from any of those questions which arise about the future connections of Pakistan or Hindustan with the Crown. These are, however, of practical importance and may even be upon us very quickly, and on them I must speak for a little. We could not make ourselves responsible for the defence of any part of India against external attack otherwise than as a part of our duty to the United Nations instrument unless a link is preserved with the British Crown and unless they form part of what I shall still call the British Empire and Commonwealth of Nations, or unless treaties of alliance are made, with due balance of advantage on each side, such as we make with other foreign countries for our own security. Furthermore, we ought not to undertake responsibilities towards foreigners as the result of a treaty towards the discharge of which we have not the means of making an effective contribution. And in judging such matters we must have continual regard to our commitments and to the danger in Europe and here at home which involve our national survival as free men.

Above all, and in the first place, in all that we undertake, whether as an individual power or with the United Nations organisation, or in respect of Western Union, we must devote ourselves in all these matters to the preservation of as much as is left to us of the former British Empire or Commonwealth of Nations comprised within the circle of the British Crown. That we rate above all, and all other arrangements which we may make must be subordinate to that. For us to take the responsibility, otherwise than by treaty, carefully considered at the moment, or through the United Nations, for any country not even symbolically or constitutionally associated with us, would be to commit ourselves, without return, to obligations beyond our strength to fulfil and to lay burdens upon our people more than they could bear.

I leave the confines of our wide domain and turn to another subject mentioned in the fourth paragraph of the King's Speech. The Speech refers to Germany and the economic revival in the Western Zones which has followed the currency reform. This seems to have been a well-conceived though tardy measure, and we are all glad to learn that it has produced good results, that it has been beneficial in many ways and also that the Germans are working hard to design a democratic constitution for those parts of their country not under the Russian Communist yoke. We on this side cordially approve of every well-considered step that can be taken to associate Germany with the Western civilisation, to which German literature, philosophy, art, music and science have made immortal contributions.

There is no doubt that the actual spectacle of Soviet rule in the Russian Zone of Germany has had an educational effect throughout all the German States, an effect which no exhortations, appeals or injunctions of the Western Allies could have achieved. But the most important factor lately at work in Germany has been the spectacle of the Western Allies striving to feed the 2½ millions of Germans in the British and American sectors of Berlin by the prodigious achievement of the air lift, regardless of cost and difficulty, while the Soviet Government were doing all they could, or all they dared, to starve out these helpless people. My hope is that free, liberal civilisation and democratic Parliamentary processes will win the soul of Germany for Europe and that the great underlying harmonies of the European family will predominate over the feuds that have hitherto rent our famous parent Continent and brought upon it miseries and humiliations beyond the power of statistics to measure or language to describe.

We should put no needless obstacles in the way of a reconciliation with Germany. I was surprised that a British Socialist Government should, according to the reports which have been published, have resisted the United States desire to mitigate and abridge the process of dismantling the plants and factories in Germany which might play an essential part in economic and industrial revival. I am very glad to learn that they have now agreed with the American view. We on this side are strongly opposed to the infliction of needless severities upon the German people and to needless affronts to natural, legitimate German feelings.

It is from this point of view that we deplore the harsh and wrongful procedure which the Foreign Secretary has authorised towards the aged German generals who were taken prisoner and have now for more than three and a half years been in our power, without any charge being preferred against them. There has not been any question of this character which I have noticed in the present Parliament upon which there has been such wide and sincere agreement between all parties of the House. We have seen agreement over the whole area, ranging from the very-advanced humanitarianism of the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Stokes), to the strict themes of military honour and military etiquette which are associated with my hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Petersfield (Sir G. Jeffreys). It is a wide bracket and I am very glad to find it. Conservatives, Socialists and Liberals who spoke in the Debate on the Adjournment vied with one another in condemning from every conceivable angle of approach this act of administrative and political stupidity and of judicial impropriety, equally repugnant to humanitarian and soldierly sentiment. The reply of the Under-Secretary of State for War on Tuesday night to the protests from all quarters was received with almost universal disapprobation. I am amazed that the Foreign Secretary should go out of his way to add to the many burdens he has to bear by picking up and piling so needlessly on his shoulders this lump of folly.

But I go further than this particular case. The time has come to stop these denazification trials which are taking place throughout Germany. We run the risk of creating a veritable vested interest among those who are engaged in conducting the vast number of trials which are in process, or liable to come on. The principal criminals have been executed by their conquerors. There may be some exceptional cases, such as the slaughter of men of the Norfolk Regiment, which was the subject of a trial in Hamburg last week. This it was right to pursue, as one would pursue a common case of murder, even after 15 years had passed before it came to light——

Mr. Sydney Silverman (Nelson and Colne) So is the other case.

Mr. Churchill —but the general process of denazification has gone on far too long and should be brought to an immediate end. My attention has been drawn to the case of Baron Weisacker. I was asked to make some affidavit about him, as many people in this country have been asked. I was not able to do so, because I had never met Weisacker; never being brought officially into contact with his work. He was a permanent official in the Foreign Office under Ribbentrop, in a similar capacity to that of Sir Alexander Cadogan formerly and of Sir Orme Sargent now, in the Foreign Office here. Now, after three and a half years, he is being tried.

Mr. Elwyn Jones (Plaistow) On a point of Order. Is it in Order when the German civilian to whom the right hon. Gentleman is referring is on trial, that this matter, which is sub judice, should be brought into discussion?

Mr. Churchill I am not attempting to deal with the merits of the particular case, on which the court will pronounce, and I am not informed upon them. I am using this as an illustration to show the kind of deadly error which, in my opinion, is being committed at this time by the policy——

Mr. S. Silverman On a point of Order. If a man is on trial is it in Order for a right hon. Member to say that to put him on trial was a deadly error and to say that in the course of the trial? Is not that out of Order?

Mr. Churchill On that point of Order, may I point out that this is not a matter under the authority of His Majesty's Government?

Mr. Silverman Of course it is.

Mr. Churchill Not at all. It is in the American zone of occupation and is decided by the United States Government.

Mr. Speaker It appears to me that this person's name has been brought in as a rather hypothetical illustration of what is going on in the American zone, to which the right hon. Gentleman objects. I do not think it is a comment on the innocence or guilt of the individual and I do not think it can effect the actual trial. It is, therefore, not a comment on the trial.

Mr. S. Silverman Further to that point of Order. Is the House to understand that to describe a prosecution as a deadly error is not a comment on the particular case?

Mr. Speaker This particular prosecution is not described as a deadly error. That was a description of the whole of the proceedings; or so I understood.

Mr. Churchill The hon. Member who tried to differentiate himself from me excites in my heart a great pleasure, but I may point out that, in order to do so, he has to separate himself from the whole line and theme of thought for which he has made himself known in the whole House for a long time, but who cares——

Mr. Silverman rose——

Mr. Churchill No, I will not give way.

Mr. Silverman On a point of Order. I should like to ask whether the right hon. Gentleman is entitled, having taken one side in a case, to impute to me that I took the other side. The point of Order I submitted to you Sir was not intended to indicate on my part any agreement, or disagreement, either with the prosecution or the defence in this, or any other case.

Mr. Speaker I hardly think that is a point of Order.

Mr. Churchill The misuse of points of Order is a well known art and device of this House. I have no intention whatever of going into the merits of this matter, although I have just as much right to express an opinion about it as people in England had to express opinions about the Dreyfus case when, for years, it was the subject of many comments, and major comment, although it was taking place under foreign jurisdiction. But there are thousands of other cases pending of smaller people of all kinds. Revenge is, of all satisfactions, the most costly and long drawn out; retributive persecution is, of all policies, the most pernicious. Our policy, subject to the exceptional cases I have mentioned, should henceforward be to draw the sponge across the crimes and horrors of the past—hard as that may be—and look, for the sake of all our salvation, towards the future.

There can be no revival of Europe without the active and loyal aid "of all the German tribes." I use the expression because it is not obnoxious to them and, also, because it carries with it the federal conception which, I think, should play an important part. Nothing should stand in the way of enabling them to render to Europe the great services which are in their power. It has been my hope that France, which we see in such political confusion and weakness, will find a way out of her own troubles and a path to true European leadership by stretching out her hand to her enemy of a thousand years and, in the moment of absolute German prostration, bring them back to the circle of Christendom and the family of Europe.

His Majesty's Opposition have supported all the steps which have been taken by the Government to build up the economic strength offered to Western Europe by the Marshall Plan, and very considerable economic progress is being made in many European countries. All this process can only be effected if Europe is shielded from external aggression

from the East by the fact that the United States associate themselves morally and physically with the efforts which are being made to create a defensive front for the countries outside the iron curtain. We therefore trust that all the military arrangements which are now being made will have the fullest support from the great Republic across the Atlantic, even though what military preparations are made in the West can only be, for some years, quite subsidiary to the deterrent power of the atomic bomb. This alone at the present time prevents the rebarbarisation and enslavement of Europe by the Communist forces directed from the Kremlin. I am very glad to hear that significant silence from the Government Benches which gives consent. [Interruption.]

We have given every support to Western Union. More than that. I may claim that there is an unbroken chain between the speech I made at Zurich in September, 1946, and the Marshall Aid upon which this great and valuable policy of the Government has been founded. I am sorry if personal jealousies, or other motives below the level of events, have led the Socialist Party at first to embark upon the unnatural plan of narrowing United Europe down to United Socialist Europe. I warned them at the very beginning that that was not a hopeful line of advance. I hope that their recent publication, entitled, I think, "Facing the Facts," or "Face the Facts"—[HON. MEMBERS: "Feet on the Ground."]—"Feet on the Ground." If hon. Gentlemen opposite were to persist very long in facing the facts they would find their feet on the ground. And they might very soon find the rest of their bodies as well.

Mr. Kirkwood (Dumbarton Burghs) The wish is father to the thought.

Mr. Churchill I hope that this recent publication of the Socialist Party means that the Government itself will abandon such an absurd attempt. I am, however, sorry indeed that they should, at the present time, have shown themselves definitely below all the leading statesmen of France and the French Government and below the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg in supporting the project of a European Deliberative Assembly.

Mr. Scollan Who are the French statesmen?

Mr. Churchill Who are the statesmen? Well, many of the vice presidents——

Mr. Scollan They are shooting the miners.

Mr. Churchill The hon. Member asked a question——

Mr. Scollan Yes, I asked, who are the statesmen?

Mr. Churchill Many of the vice presidents of the United Nations movement which is being carried on and which started at the Hague—M. Blum, who deserves to be treated with respect; M. Gaspari, the Prime Minister of Italy; M. Spaak, a very important statesman who is in charge of Belgian affairs. I believe some of these gentlemen are Socialists. So it certainly does not well beseem the hon. Gentleman to fret and fume himself because their names are mentioned. We should show some respect for the leading figures of the Socialist movement in Europe, even though we shall find it more difficult to do so for those who fill that role over here.

I regret very much the attitude which the Government have taken and I trust it will be amended in the future. I have always considered that our international and unofficial movement for a united Europe should have as its object the creation of an atmosphere in Europe, what Mr. Lecky called "a climate of opinion," among all its peoples and of the people of this island, and of the British Empire, and of the United States, in favour of the ideal of European unity. If that could be done it would be a very great boon to us all. I believe that this can be achieved without injury to the national traditions, sentiments and character of any States, large or small, concerned. In proportion as this succeeds, and as it certainly will succeed unless interrupted by dire violence, our movement will at every stage be a help to the Foreign Secretary in the policy which, if he is not led astray by small motives, may confer upon him a lasting reputation.

I now come back from these wider fields to our domestic affairs and to the paragraph in the Gracious Speech which deals with our defences and the contribution we make to the great causes and projects to which the great majority of the House have earnestly devoted themselves. "My Ministers"—" says the Gracious Speech—"are taking steps to ensure that My Armed Forces shall be efficient and well equipped, and that the best use shall be made of men called up under the National Service Act." It is late in the day to make such declarations, however welcome they may be. Three years ago, when the world was peaceful, vast numbers of men and women were kept standing about in military organisations. Then, as the scene darkened, these forces were rapidly diminished to levels which surely should have been considered in good time and in a well-thought-out plan of transition from war to peace defences. When we were safe we were strong. As dangers grew we made ourselves weak. Now, when the risk of war is on the lips of all leading Ministers and the grave words "a threat to peace" are included, not only in the King's Speech, but in the proceedings of the Security Council of the United Nations, we find ourselves falling between the two stools of previous undue extravagance and later improvident dispersals.

We have received no official information of these military matters, and I have found it necessary to place on record the fact that we as a party can take no responsibility for the present state of our defences. This should certainly be the subject of severe debate, not only on the normal occasions which the Session affords, but perhaps also in Secret Session. I would not be deterred from this expedient by the fear that there may be elements in this House who feel towards Great Britain no sense of comradeship or brotherhood. Even Secret Sessions have their secrets. It is not necessary to say everything. But there are advantages in having a free and unpublished discussion of these vital topics, and it might place the House of Commons in a better position to judge of them correctly without at the same time causing needless untimely public agitation or distress at home or unfavourable reactions among the public of other countries.

For the present, all I can say on the subject of defence is that on this, as in all great matters of common interest, we are without official information. Our confidence in the Minister of Defence has been greatly shaken by his grievous lapse from duty to party in the National Service Bill of two years ago. Nevertheless, in fairness, we should acknowledge the courage of a Socialist Government in introducing compulsory military service in time of peace, and that this action of theirs stands forth in favourable contrast with their behaviour about the National Service Bill which was introduced by the Chamberlain Government in the spring of 1939.

All I can say this afternoon is that we shall support and aid the Government, irrespective of party politics or interests, in their recruiting campaigns for the Regular and Territorial Forces, and I trust that our manhood throughout the island will not be deterred from coining forward by the record in peace and war or by the frequent utterances of the present occupant of the War Office and several of his principal colleagues. If these Ministers fail in their duty to the nation, the nation must endeavour all the more to fill the gap.

I now come—and let me relieve the House by saying "finally"—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] One has to try to cover the general ground. I now come to our party affairs at home. Two Bills are mentioned in the Gracious Speech—the Parliament Bill and the Measure for the nationalisation of steel. It would be out of Order, and I am sure I have no wish, to anticipate on this occasion the Second Reading and other Debates which we shall have upon these proposals. I am content this afternoon to survey the general picture of the legislative programme in which they are the predominant features.

The Parliament Bill, as we said some weeks ago, has disturbed a settlement under which we had lived tolerably for 40 years. It has always been described by us as an act of aggression by one-half of the nation against what is probably by now the larger half. It was committed at a time when our ears were being wearied by continued Ministerial exhortations to united national effort, both in the military and domestic sphere. It was committed for the purpose of placing upon the Statute Book the Steel Nationalisation Bill before the approaching and now discernible expiry of the

life of the present Parliament. I say there has been no justification, if we look back upon the past, for this attack upon the Second Chamber, which had bowed against its better judgment to the decisions of the House of Commons on many issues which a future verdict of the electorate will condemn.

But there is one question generally and of complete detachment from any Measures which we have before, us on which I will for a moment dwell. We are told that the attitude of Second Chambers in any country in the world should be absolutely equal as between the two parties. But this argument misunderstands the object for which Second Chambers in so many countries all over the world have been created) That object is to prevent wild and irrevocable decisions being taken, either upon a passing impulse, or in consequence of political intrigue and calculation, and of securing, as did the Parliament Act, 1911, a healthy contact with and recourse to the settled will and wisdom of a democratic electorate.

The attitude and function of a Second Chamber in any land is essentially one of safeguarding and delaying violent or subversive Measures which may endanger the long-gathered heritage of the whole people, without the gravity and significance of the issues involved being fairly and intelligibly placed before them. From that point of view, it cannot be argued, and has never been argued in any of these countries of which I am speaking, or the Dominions of the Crown in which there are Second Chambers, that a Second Chamber should be absolutely equal as between a party which proceeds by processes of gradual and natural evolution on the one hand, and a party that claims, even on an abnormal electoral verdict, that so long as they have mentioned any matter in their party programme, they have an unlimited right to dispose, scatter or destroy the whole structure of tradition and society slowly built up across centuries of trial and error by the genius of the nation.

We, therefore, challenge any inroads—and when the time comes we shall discuss the matter—upon the powers possessed by the House of Lords under the Parliament Act, especially when these are unaccompanied by any reform or improvement in the character and influence of the Second Chamber. These are matters pertaining to the general position in which we stand today and, of course, we shall refer to them when the time comes to discuss them in due course.

It is also in this spirit of comprehensive survey appropriate to the general Debate on the Address that I will make one observation upon the further grave step in the nationalisation of industry with which we are threatened in the Gracious Speech. I say—I am not dealing with the merits—that this Measure is not brought forward on its merits or to meet a national need, or to help national revival or production. I am certain that it does not command the conscientious convictions of the most responsible Ministers of the Crown or of many Members of the Labour Party. There are, I am sure, many Members on the benches opposite who share the misgivings though not the courage of the hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Ivor Thomas) whose speech produced a deep impression yesterday and very remarkable and encouraging perturbation in the ranks he had just left.

In this further Measure of nationalisation we are confronted with an enterprise of faction contrary to the practical and immediate needs and interests of our recovery after the war. I declare that the failure of nationalisation will become more apparent with every month that passes, with every month that makes it plain that one basic industry or service after another is being transferred from the credit or profitable side of our economic life to the debit or loss account. It is very wrong, while we are still dependent upon the immense subsidies granted to us by capitalist, free enterprise America, that any body of Ministers should band themselves together to flourish in the face of the world this flag of party dogma, of national dissension, and of further British impoverishment.

We can discern only too plainly the squalid party motives which lie behind and which have impelled the Government to a further aggravation of our difficulties and burdens. Although many of them see quite clearly what would be best for the country at this time, they are compelled to stand against the light to gratify the party feeling and class hatred of their more extreme followers by this further gratification of the injurious instincts by which they gained office in the

past. It is the duty of every one in the industries affected by this new disturbance and oppression to continue to do their utmost, in spite of all antagonisms, to promote the greatest possible productive efforts. It is not anybody's duty to lend assistance to the bringing into operation of party schemes detrimental to British economy in these critical days.

I can only conclude by repeating what was well said on Tuesday by my right hon. Friend the Member for Warwick and Leamington (Mr. Eden)—to whom I am under so many great debts for so many years of comradeship—namely, that should we become responsible for the welfare of the nation after the General Election, we should not hesitate to expunge from the Statute Book Measures of nationalisation which stand on no better foundation than that of doctrinal fallacy and partisan intrigue.

4.10 p.m.

The Lord President of the Council (Mr. Herbert Morrison) We have just listened to what I suppose we should regard as the principal indictment of the Opposition against His Majesty's Government and the contents of the Gracious Speech. I am bound to say, Sir, that, if this is the worst we have to expect, we can feel secure in our position. I have never heard the right hon. Gentleman, whom I have heard make many most admirable speeches in this House, make a less effective criticism of the Government than he has made this afternoon. Certainly, he has covered a good deal of ground—the Commonwealth and Empire, Burma, India, Germany, Defence, and two of the Measures which are included in the Gracious Speech. It is curious that he should only have mentioned two of the Bills referred to in the Address. He said nothing of the Bill for National Parks, which I should have thought would have delighted his English soul. Nor did he say anything about legal aid for people of limited means. Apparently, he has only two complaints about this legislative programme—two only, so far as I can see the Parliament Bill and the Iron and Steel Bill. If in this lengthy legislative programme the leader of the Conservative Party has two Bills only to complain about, this programme must represent an extraordinary degree of popularity in the country.

I thought that in the observations the right hon. Gentleman made about certain Commonwealth and Empire problems, he made some comments that were irresponsible, mischievous and calculated to do a great deal of harm. The trouble with the right hon. Gentleman about matters of this kind is that he is incapable of moving forward as the years go by. He will not face the fact that the handling of Commonwealth problems in the year 1948 is a different business from what it was at the end of the nineteenth century, that time marches on and circumstances change.

He is quite wrong in thinking that because we have tended to use the word "Commonwealth" rather than the word "Empire," that that has anything to do with Oliver Cromwell. It has not; and, as he came on to Ireland later, it is perhaps a pity that he brought Oliver Cromwell into the matter at all. It has nothing to do with our economic views. We believe that the word "Commonwealth" is a better word in spirit and accuracy to use in describing this extraordinary assembly of nations than the words "British Empire." We have a lot of sympathy with a politician who said some years ago that the trouble with the Tory Party was that it dished out patriotism by the imperial pint. [Interruption.] The right hon. Gentleman really does not observe the rules of two-way traffic. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Defence happened to tell me something earlier on which it was material I should know in relation to the speech which was being made by the Leader of the Opposition. The right hon. Gentleman begged our pardon and said that he did not want to interrupt this conversation. I am not complaining about it, but I must say that the right hon. Gentleman must not complain if, when he is speaking, somebody says a word to somebody else, and then, when a direct reply is made to an observation of his, he is taking no notice.

Mr. Churchill I intended no courtesy to the right hon. Gentleman—[An HON. MEMBER: "It was deliberate."] I was deliberate in my intention not to intend a courtesy, but, with regard to the question he asked me, whether the expression "Imperialism by the imperial pint" comes from me, I certainly used that phrase.

Mr. Morrison As a matter of fact, I did not ask the right hon. Gentleman whether he said it. I said that somebody did, and it was "Patriotism by the imperial pint," and not "Imperialism by the imperial pint," which would be a little repetitive. I think there was a lot in that observation, and we certainly have had some more patriotism by the imperial pint this afternoon.

What was the great complaint of the right hon. Gentleman about certain tendencies in Commonwealth affairs? Let me say straight away that the recent Commonwealth Conference of Ministers was exceedingly successful—and, while I was not present at the Commonwealth Conference of Parliamentary representatives, I gather that much the same was true of that conference too. This will be, I think, only my third assembly of Commonwealth statesmen, and it was easily the best, the most encouraging and the most constructive and united in its outlook, and that notwithstanding the fact that three new Commonwealth countries have joined us—India, Pakistan and Ceylon. The spirit of unity, the wish to arrive at accommodation, the wish to agree upon the general purport of the matters discussed, were really exceedingly encouraging, and I would say that the spirit of unity and common purpose in the Commonwealth today, and the wish to agree, are not only not less, but, I should be inclined to think, greater than they ever were in the history of this great community of nations. I should like to add that the conference was presided over with great ability, tolerance, restraint, and competence by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the satisfaction of everybody present.

What was the gravamen of the right hon. Gentleman's complaint? He really is so dogmatic, he is so doctrinaire, he suffers from these fixed ideas and from an incapacity to adapt himself to changing circumstances. He complained that the word "Empire" is going out, that the British Empire is going out. As a matter of fact, the British Empire never had any legal existence. The Empire of India did, and the term the British Empire was used as a matter of convenience for many years. In the right hon. Gentleman's Government, as he knows, we agreed to modify the description by talking about the British Commonwealth and Empire.

The right hon. Gentleman also complains that the word "Dominion" seems to be going out of use, and that the word "British" is being dropped from its association with the Commonwealth. As a matter of fact, the word "British" has not been universally used in connection with the Commonwealth for quite a time. The term "Commonwealth" has been used before, in connection with official pronouncements, I think under other Governments. [Interruption.] I think it will be found that it is so, but it can be checked. Surely, one of the great characteristics of the political genius of the British race is its capacity to adapt itself as time proceeds and circumstances change, and, in particular, not to bother about the use of particular words, if other words are found to be more convenient to describe something or to command more general acceptance. It is part of our political genius that we do not quarrel unduly about words.

But the right hon. Gentleman almost said that he would be willing to break up a Commonwealth for the maintenance of a particular word, which has been used since his early years. It really is not worth it, and, of course, as the years roll on, and now that India, Pakistan and Ceylon have joined up with the Commonwealth, the use of the word "British," as a description of the whole community of nations, becomes a little more unreal as compared with previous times. If that is so, if there is no official decision about dropping the word "British"—and there is nothing deliberate about it; it was just how things happened—if the word "British" does not find favour, and the word "Commonwealth" is generally acceptable as, on the whole, a more accurate description of this association of States, why should we not use it? It is this obstinacy, this dogmatism, this doctrinaire, old-fashioned, nineteenth century attitude of the right hon. Gentleman that are placing such severe limits upon his utility in connection with these Commonwealth matters and make him a menace to the unity of the nations of the Commonwealth.

As to the use of the word "Dominion," again, there was this hesitance about a word which has been so frequently used and may continue to be used. Some Dominions may have a feeling that it is not the right description. What does it matter if, instead of talking about the Dominions, we talk about the Commonwealth nations or countries? One word is

as acceptable and accurate as the other, and if, indeed, it is more acceptable, surely it is a statesmanlike thing not to use the words that have become outmoded. Therefore, I think that the right hon. Gentleman is quite wrong about this point, and that the criticisms he made, coming as they do from the Leader of a great political party in this country, are the kind of criticisms which, instead of adding to the unity of the Commonwealth, are likely to do more harm than good. That is why I say that, in these respects, the speech was irresponsible and mischievous, and I say so with very great earnestness.

There was also a reference to Mr. Costello and Mr. Nehru, and the right hon. Gentleman said that their feelings were to be placated. I thought those were not reasonable observations for the right hon. Gentleman to make. Mr. Costello was not at the Conference, but Mr. Nehru was, and nobody could have been more helpful or more co-operative than were both the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan, and also the Prime Minister of Ceylon in connection with our proceedings. For the right hon. Gentleman, in relation to this great country of India, against which he seems to have a substantial prejudice nowadays, to make these extraordinary observations at the expense of Mr. Nehru was the reverse of useful, and they really ought not to have been made at all. As the Prime Minister of a Commonwealth country, Mr. Nehru is entitled to some respect from hon. Members of this House and to the same consideration as any other Commonwealth statesman.

Then, the right hon. Gentleman went on to say with a tone of regret, that there were not many Conservative Prime Ministers in the Commonwealth, or in the Empire, as he prefers to call it in these times. If I may say so, it has nothing to do with any British politician what the Prime Ministers of any other Commonwealth country are. That was an improper and utterly mischievous interference in the internal affairs of Commonwealth countries. What the politics of other Commonwealth Prime Ministers are has nothing to do with the right hon. Gentleman, and he had better deal with the politics of our own Prime Minister, because that is fair game. It has nothing to do with them or with us if the Prime Ministers of these other countries of the Commonwealth are Labour, Liberal or Conservative. It is their business, and for them to deal with, as Commonwealth countries.

The right hon. Gentleman had something to say with regard to Burma and India, and, in particular, he was critical about the unhappy deaths which have taken place in the course of the communal warfare or rioting in India, and he alleged that the British Government was directly responsible for the loss of these lives. I wish the right hon. Gentleman one of these days, would say clearly what he would have done about India if, unfortunately, he had been in power as a result of the last General Election. What are the facts, shortly stated? For many years past, starting with governments of which a right hon. Gentleman was a member and finishing with the Government of which he was Prime Minister, we have repeatedly assured India that we were working towards a policy of self-government and what is called Dominion status. I agree that the term "independence" was not used at that time, but, for long years, government after government have publicly declared that they were working towards self-government in India and what was called Dominion status. After all, when we say "Dominion status," we are talking about independent and self-governing status within the British Commonwealth.

Therefore, the time came when these undertakings had to be looked at more seriously. Progress had been made in Indian self-government as the years went on. For example, under the Government of India Act, 1935, which was opposed by the right hon. Gentleman, even though it was introduced by a Conservative Government, a step forward was taken on the road of progress. The war ended and discussions had to be opened up. We had to decide whether these undertakings and pledges should be honoured, or whether, on the other hand, we should resist their implementation and be faced with a possibility of large-scale military operations in India, in order to hold India down, contrary to the pledges which successive British Governments had given in regard to a progressive movement towards Indian self-government.

Lord John Hope (Midlothian and Peebles, Northern) Will the right hon. Gentleman allow me? Why did his party never give this party the slightest credit at the time for the steps towards self-government in India which he now admits were taken by it?

Mr. Morrison In dealing with the Act of 1935 the Conservative Government had considerable difficulty with their own supporters and considerable help from the present Prime Minister, and, therefore, I think that criticism is misplaced. I want to know from the Leader of the Conservative Party, or from somebody on his behalf, whether, if they had been in power from 1945 onwards, they would have so resisted the Indian request for independence or self-government that they would have held India down at the point of the sword and at the cost of long-term military effort and danger to British lives in India. That is what I would like to know.

Mr. Churchill It is ridiculous to ask me, having already made a long speech myself, to answer as an interruption to a speech, a hypothetical question as to what I should have done or what the Government which I headed would have done. It is abusing the indulgence of the House.

Mr. Morrison This is typical. We have a steady refusal on the part of the Leader of the Conservative Party to tell the country what a Conservative Government would do in the future, and now we have an obstinate refusal to say what they would have done, had they been in power since 1945, notwithstanding the fact that the right hon. Gentleman has criticised what we have done. If he would not have done what we have done, I want to know what he would have done. He says that is hypothetical, and that he does not want to tell us.

Mr. Churchill I did not want to interrupt.

Mr. Morrison But I invited the interruption; I have had interruptions from the right hon. Gentleman over the months which I did not invite.

Mr. Churchill I consider that, in the first place, we should not have introduced the word "independence" for which there was no warrant in any of the previous negotiations between the parties. I consider, in the second place, that the 30,000 or 40,000 British troops who were squandered in the shameful failures of Palestine could have been stationed in India and could, without any bloodshed, have maintained the peace and order of that country—[Interruption]. Well, hon. Members have asked me, and they had better take what I am going to tell them—during the years which were required to build up a really strong, effective Indian administration and to transfer the necessary powers of government to them under all proper safeguards for the future.

That, I believe, could have been done if this nation had set itself resolutely to the fulfilment of its mission in India. But the right hon. Gentlemen opposite—and no one is more at fault than the Prime Minister who sinned against the light, because he was well instructed on Indian conditions, having sat on the Simon Committee and helped to prepare the Report; no one was more responsible than he—decided to get out without regard to any other considerations, no matter what was smashed or destroyed on the way. Time limits were fixed and measures were taken which even Lord Templewood with his wide experience of Indian administration had to condemn. Measures were taken to get out of the country, no matter what happened, and to cast off all responsibilities. The Forces were reduced to a position where they could do nothing to stop the atrocious crimes committed by the different bodies of Indians on one another.

All this course of events could, I am sure, have taken a much more secure, and, above all, a much more bloodless course, if courage, patience and firmness of purpose had been executed. But the right hon. Gentleman and his friends have always been desirous of breaking down British rule in India and doing away with the British Empire in all its forms. They threw themselves into this work with gusto and with glee. Let them bear in their memories the blood, the death and the agony of 400,000 human beings which have largely resulted from their own base and callous intervention in this vast affair.

Mr. Morrison Did the noble Lord before that accuse us of being murderers?

Earl Winterton (Horsham) I said that the right hon. Gentleman and his friends are responsible for the murder of 400,000 people in India.

Mr. Morrison I admit that the right hon. Gentleman has given me a very full reply even though it is not particularly conclusive. But what does that reply amount to? It amounts to an assertion, to a claim, to the affirmation of a policy that, if the Conservative Party had been returned in 1945—and he was speaking for the Conservative Party—what they would have done would have been to have resisted the claims of India to independence and full self-government, would have kept them in their position of a Dependency, lacking complete self-government, and would have enforced it by military power. The right hon. Gentleman himself admits that at least 40,000 troops would probably have been involved, and, it may be, that additional troops would have been needed, or, rather, he would have diverted them from Palestine.

I say, first of all, I do not believe that was a policy which was acceptable to the British people; I do not believe it was a policy which was acceptable to the people of India, who had received many pledges and promises from our people and from the Governments of our country. As a matter of fact, it was not acceptable according to the opinion and advice which we received from India. The authorities in India itself—responsible British authorities—warned us against pursuing any such course. Therefore, I say, that is again an indication of the irresponsibility of the Conservative Party in these matters. Let me say that, as compared with that kind of line, the statesmanship, patience and tolerance of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in this matter have been amply justified by the events which have since taken place.

I do not need, I think, to deal with questions in regard to Germany which, no doubt, will be referred to later as the Debate proceeds. They were, in any case, rather passing references. But I can say this. The right hon. Gentleman asked that we should draw a sponge across the war crimes trials in Germany. I am informed by the Foreign Office that we have drawn a sponge across war crimes trials in Germany, and that from 1st September last, no further war crimes trials will take place except in the case of the four generals to whom reference has been made. There have been no further extraditions except in cases which involve murder. With regard to the four generals, although we regret the delay which has taken place, the Government view is that, since people subordinate to these generals had already been tried, and some of them punished for crimes which, it is alleged, were in pursuance of orders given by the generals, it would be wrong that those higher up should escape all trial. That is all I would say about that point.

Mr. Churchill Why did not the Government formulate the charges?

Mr. Morrison The charges are being formulated; they must be formulated before the trial takes place. That was discussed and explained at the time.

With regard to defence, my right hon. Friend the Minister of Defence is holding himself in readiness to take part later in the Debate, and will be ready to reply, should there be speeches on Defence in addition to that of the right hon. Gentleman.

The right hon. Gentleman mentioned the Parliament Bill and the Iron and Steel Bill. It is difficult for me to say anything new about the Parliament Bill because I think we have just about exhausted our argumentative capacity, and it is difficult to think of new arguments, one way or another. The right hon. Gentleman has certainly given us again a crude defence of the attitude of the Conservative Party. He says that the purpose of a Second Chamber is not as a revising Chamber and a strictly impartial body, to produce a political balance which is fairly equal between the contending political parties, but that its purpose is to delay or defeat wild Measures. What does that mean? It means that we should preserve in this country a Second Chamber which is biased and which is dominated by one political

party. It is not irrelevant that that political party happens to be the party of the right hon. Gentleman; that suits him very well indeed. He has affirmed in effect that the purpose of that Second Chamber is to hold in check the legislative programme of non-Conservative Governments—a situation which he loudly denounced away back in the days of the Liberal Government round about 1910.

Mr. Churchill Before the Parliament Act was passed.

Mr. Morrison Yes, to make such remedy as was thought fit at that time. The right hon. Gentleman evidently does not conceive that the existing Second Chamber could be a check on the wild and irresponsible policies of Conservative Governments. Why, for example, should not the Second Chamber have held up the anti-trade union Act of 1927? There was no electoral mandate, no demand in the country for it. It was a sheer Act of partisan political spite by the Conservative Government against their opponents. But their Lordships did not interfere with it. This was a wild Measure; it was an irresponsible Act. This was an Act without any electoral mandate whatever.

Mr. Churchill No mandate was required after the General Strike which had paralysed the whole country, and which was only defeated when actual famine threatened the great cities of the land. As a matter of fact, it was never altered in all the years until the present time.

Mr. Morrison That argument is utterly irrelevant, as the Act itself was utterly irrelevant to the General Strike of 1926. If people want a General Strike in sufficient numbers, they will have it, and if they do not want it, they will not have it. I do not believe that Acts of Parliament are going to affect it, but in any case that Act of Parliament dealt not only with the question of what was asserted to be a sympathetic strike in the Act, but it also took away the rights of the Civil Service trade unions to be affiliated to the Trades Union Congress for industrial purposes, notwithstanding the fact that the Civil Service trade unions did not join the General Strike in 1926.

It went on to interfere with the established and recognised procedure, to which the right hon. Gentleman had formerly been a party, as to trade union political funds. It altered the Act of 1913. That had nothing whatever to do with the General Strike. On the contrary, the more working men and women are permitted to join together to take peaceful political action, the less likely we are to get general strikes. But the Bill went through. [Interruption.] The right hon. Gentleman should not talk about where political parties get their money from; otherwise I will put another direct question to him—and he will have to take an awful long time to answer it—as to how the Conservative Party so readily accumulate a million pounds at almost five minutes' notice.

Mr. Churchill I hope the right hon. Gentleman is not suggesting that improper methods have been adopted; that suggestion ought not to be thrown out. It should be made the subject of a definite charge. What is highly objectionable in what the right hon. Gentleman has said is the process which he supports of extracting money from Conservatives and Liberals for the purpose of advancing Socialist policies under threats of intimidation.

Mr. Morrison Of course, the right hon. Gentleman was one of the authors of the Trade Union Act, 1913, which permitted these terrible things to happen for quite a long time. Of course, they were not really terrible things. Any trade unionist who does not wish to pay the political levy——

Mr. Churchill He is victimised.

Mr. Morrison No, he is not victimised at all. It is really nonsense to suggest that trade unionists are victimised, if they intimate that they do not wish to pay the political levy. All that happens is that they cease to vote upon political matters, which, of course, follows. The right hon. Gentleman should not swallow the stories which the Tory Central Office put out. He ought to know from his Liberal days that there is one place in the world which must be treated with suspicion as to its accuracy and truth; and that is the Tory Central Office.

The only other thing to which I wish to refer is the proposal to deal with the iron and steel problem. We are, of course, not permitted at present to deal with it at length, but we can have adequate Debates about it later, and I assure the House that, so far as we are concerned, we shall argue the case on its merits in accordance with the declarations which have been made by the Government, and by myself in particular. I have often been reminded, that it is up to the nationalisers to prove their case as to why they are doing what they are doing and why the public interest demands it. I have always added, although the Opposition has never remembered it, that it is up to the critics of nationalisation to show why they want things left as they are and why they regard the existing position as satisfactory. We shall be perfectly content to argue that issue in Debate when the Bill comes before the House, and as it will be published tomorrow, hon. Members will soon be in the fullest possession of the proposals.

We have all listened to the speech of the right hon. Member for Woodford (Mr. Churchill). We do not think that it in any way shakes the standing of the Government or the programme as embodied in the Gracious Speech from the Throne. If that is all that can be said by the Leader of the Opposition, if that is the best case that can be made against His Majesty's Government at the present time, I do not wonder that we saw two further Labour Members come into the Chamber the other day, this time from Scotland. We shall see many more, maintaining and consolidating this great progressive majority. Therefore, we feel comforted by the speech which the right hon. Gentleman has made and, as I have said, if that is the best case that the Conservatives can make against the Government, the Government are coming out of these Debates very well indeed.

4.49 p.m.

Air-Commodore Harvey (Macclesfield) It is my intention to refer to matters relating to defence, and in doing so may I say that I should have thought that either the Minister of Defence or some of the Service Ministers would have been on the Government Front Bench. At the moment there is nobody at all representing either the Ministry of Defence or the three Fighting Services. Perhaps the Government Chief Whip will take steps to get somebody there.

We on this side of the House, in listening to the King's Speech, were most disappointed at the reference to defence. I should like to read what paragraph 8 says: "My Ministers are taking steps to ensure that My Armed Forces shall be efficient and well equipped, and that the best use shall be made of men called up under the National Service Act, Recruiting for the Regular Forces will be stimulated, and the Reserve and Auxiliary Forces will also be built up. A Bill to amend the Territorial and Reserve Forces Act will be laid before you." Listening to that paragraph, I thought it would automatically be mentioned at any time when the Service Estimates are introduced, when we are given the normal assurance that the money is well spent and that everything is being taken care of. It did not help or reassure us on this side of the House when we listened to that part of the King's Speech. If paragraph 8 had followed paragraph 4, which deals with foreign affairs to some extent, we should at least have felt that our defences were coupled with the world situation. Instead of that three or four paragraphs are missed and this one is slipped in rather like an afterthought. We are most disappointed, and, while I shall confine myself to the Royal Air Force, no doubt hon. Friends of mine will deal with the other two Services.

We on this side of the House do not think it is a controversial matter to ask whether we are getting good value for our money, for the sum of £700 million per year is spent on the Fighting Services. It is a lot of money when the country is going through economic difficulties. Very few of us are satisfied that we are getting value for our money. On this side of the House, during the last three years and three months, we have continually uttered warnings on defence to the Government. We have not all the time asked for a bigger Air Force, a bigger Army or a bigger Navy, but we have demanded that we should have efficient, well-run Fighting Services. I was much impressed by a leading article in the "Manchester Guardian" on 20th February. That article said: "There are few people, in and out of Parliament, who are in a position to extract from the statistics in last night's Defence White Paper the answer to the question: Have we reached the point at which national defence is becoming dangerously inefficient and inadequate?" It went on to say:

“There are impartial observers who are convinced that the National Service Scheme itself will be a source of weakness, rather than strength, to the Fighting Services. Has not the time come to reconsider the whole framework of Imperial Defence, scrap the 'call-up,' which has gradually been mutilated beyond recognition, and go back to the conception of a small, efficient highly trained regular Army, Navy and Air Force (this time well paid) with enthusiastic though perhaps less efficient Territorial forces to back them up?” I think that leading article contains a good deal of sense. I have never thought—and I have said so on at least one occasion—that the National Service man as such, would be of any use to the Air Force at all, and certainly not for 12 months. I doubt whether he would be of any use if the period of service were extended to 18 months.

At this stage I must again protest that we are addressing an empty Government Front Bench. With the exception of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, there is nobody of Ministerial rank on the Front Bench, and there is certainly no one representing the Fighting Services. Mr. Speaker gave ample warning that he was going to call hon. Members who were desirous of speaking on this subject and it is rudeness to the House to treat it in this manner. It is but typical of what happens on these occasions.

In the first place, I feel that of the three Services, those in the Royal Air Force are under-paid. Commissioned officers and all other ranks are not getting a rate of pay to compare with the cost of living as it is today, and because of that the Force does not attract nearly enough recruits. We shall not get men to come into the Fighting Services, except the few who come in because it is a tradition in their family, unless they receive remuneration commensurate with the job they are doing.

The other point I wish to raise is the housing conditions in the Fighting Services. There are far too few married quarters, and the men will not come in when it means they will have to leave their wives and children behind and be posted around the country and overseas so that they have to live apart from their families. On 4th March the Secretary of State for Air said that within 12 months there would be no fewer than 9,350 married quarters in the Air Force. I do not believe that that is enough, but what we want to know is whether that figure will be attained.

Captain Crookshank (Gainsborough) It is almost beyond belief that though more than five minutes have elapsed since the Lord President of the Council finished his speech and left the Chamber at once, there is still nobody here to represent the Fighting Services, though Mr. Speaker gave ample warning that he intended the Debate to be canalised in this direction. While it is obviously undesirable to move the Adjournment of the Debate because many want to take part in it—I see that the Minister of Defence has now arrived. I should like to protest that we have had to wait so long for a Minister concerned with Defence to be present. I hope the Colonial Secretary has taken full and ample notes of everything that has been said, though I rather have my doubts about it.

The Minister of Defence (Mr. A. V. Alexander) May I apologise to the hon. and gallant Member for Macclesfield (Air-Commodore Harvey), who was engaged in addressing the House, and to the Opposition in general, but while the Lord President was still speaking I was called away to a rather urgent Ministerial consultation. As soon as I heard of the position here, I came straight back.

Captain Crookshank Naturally we accept the Minister's explanation, but it is a pity that no one was told what had happened, and that we were in complete ignorance of whether anyone was going to come. There are Under-Secretaries and other Service Ministers, and there are even Whips.

Air-Commodore Harvey I gladly accept what the Minister of Defence says, but I did pass a message to the Under-Secretary of State for Air over an hour ago informing him that if I were called, as I hoped to be, I intended to speak on Air Force matters and I hoped that he would be here. As I say, that was over an hour ago. The Secretary of State for War has now arrived. It seems we are getting all the Ministers except the one to whom I am directly speaking. The point to which I was referring was the question of married quarters for the Fighting Services. If we are to get more

recruits, we must have more married quarters, and those men have got to be adequately remunerated for the work they do.

In referring to the Air Force personnel problem, I know that the Halton apprentices, who in recent years have proved to be the cream of the Royal Air Force, for they are young men who at the age of 15 undertake to train for three years after which many become technical officers of high rank, are buying themselves out of the Air Force in numbers which are quite alarming. They have to pay £50 to purchase their release. Only yesterday I was speaking to one young man who bought himself out because he said that as a sergeant fitter he would only get £3 a week, whereas he could earn £7 or £8 a week in civil life without any difficulty at all, and it had the added advantage that he would be able to live with his family. If this state of affairs continues for another two or three years, there will be no Air Force worth talking about.

I beg the Minister of Defence to look into these matters with great urgency, because we know that the Air Force is our first line of defence. Without the Air Force we might as well give up the ghost and stop discussing any economic or other plans. I also know that, as far as the commissioned officers are concerned, they are continually worried by the state of their financial affairs. Many are "in the red," and many of them are in the hands of moneylenders. These officers have to budget very carefully, and some of them just get along provided nothing goes wrong, but when sickness and untoward expenses take place, immediately they are in trouble. Young men cannot fly aeroplanes at 600 miles an hour when they have got this sort of trouble continually with them, and that is not the way to get an efficient Service.

As I see it, the Royal Air Force is obliged today to prepare for two kinds of war. This leads to very confused thinking and wasted effort, particularly at lower levels. Let us consider the first one. We hope there will not be another war, but if there should be it will be like the last one, World War 2—only more so. Aircraft will undoubtedly be faster; bombs will be more lethal; guided missiles will probably have a longer range than the V2 and such missiles in 1945. Otherwise, the air war may be much the same as it was between 1939 and 1945. We shall be required to have three tactical air forces, which will involve training organisation, and a vast administrative organisation.

The second type of war, for which we seem to be making only half-hearted preparations, would be a 100 per cent. scientific war. Atomic weapons and, probably, bacteriological warfare would be employed from the start in that type of war. It would probably put a finish to the world as we know it. I shall come later on to what I would do to prevent it. However, that type of war is probably easier to plan for than the first type. That type of war would call for a comparatively small force of bombers, something like 200, compared with the 1,000 or 2,000 bombers of World War 2. The 200 bombers would have to be of very high performance. They would have to be aircraft that could fly at a cruising speed of between 500 and 600 m.p.h.

I should like to know what progress is being made for the provision of such bombers. Of course, we do not want to show the world quite how far we have got. I have no doubt every effort is being made by certain countries to find out what progress we have made, and there is no reason why we should broadcast the answer to the world. On the other hand, there is no reason why this House should not be told that progress is being made, and that it will not be a question of years before we have such a bomber force. Then there would have to be a large force of fighters capable of operating at just below sonic speed. Such an air force would be required in both types of war. The coastal air force would need to be only of sufficient size to cope with the submarines of any probable aggressor.

We cannot afford to have a large tactical air force unless we intend to mount an overseas land operation during the opening phase of a war. I do not think this country has the resources to build up a large tactical air force to support such an operation. If we are working closely with our allies, it should be left to them to carry out that part of the operation.

So far as Transport Command is concerned, it has been proved in recent months that Transport Command has been far too small to meet all its various commitments. Transport Command has to operate everywhere. It is required in Malaya. It was required in West Africa when the Communist troubles took place there. Now it is required on the Berlin air lift. It is a good investment to have a large Transport Command, for it can save this country any amount of difficulty and money in taking troops quickly to a place of trouble, to quell it at its outset, instead of our having to ship them, as we had to ship the 1,800 men who recently went to Malaya. In normal times—not at the moment, because of the Berlin air lift—we should have been able to send those 1,800 men out to Malaya by Transport Command. We know that Transport Command is of very high quality. It is not, however, nearly big enough. In the case of scientific war planning must be great, but the number of aircrews will be a fraction of that required for the ordinary type of war.

During the last war, when we built up a very large Service, there were built up within it, for administration, for discipline, and for welfare, almost "empires" of organisations. I know from my own experience that officers tried to get men into their particular commands, so that a command would rise from a strength of 1,000 to a strength of 2,000, whereupon the officer in command would get another stripe on his arm. That sort of thing is something we have to stop. We must stop the building up of any form of "empire" in any of the Services. We are unable to afford it. We had organisations for air traffic control, the police, catering, and physical fitness. Most of this work could be done by the general duties officer as part of his work, whereby he would get to know his own men.

I am told that in the Air Force today, there are something like 300 courses of instruction in existence, and that there is even a course to teach men to become boxing referees. The amount of time and money that this is costing, instead of being spent on the more important job of building up a fighting service, is wicked. I sometimes think the Communists have got people planted at Adastral House who are busy inventing these courses. Men in the Air Force themselves say so. They say that is where the real war is going on—in organising courses to sap the strength of the Service, which should be spent in a better direction.

We have the Royal Air Force Regiment. It is a strange body, although it is brave and efficient. It was born out of muddled thinking by panic after Singapore. In my opinion, it is not the job of the Air Force to defend its own airfields. That is properly the commitment of those already trained for that sort of work, the Army. It is not the job of the Air Force to defend power stations or radar stations: that is a commitment of the Army.

Then there is the Anti-Aircraft Command. I do not know how well versed the Secretary of State for War is on A.A. Command, but I believe that that Command, which comes under the operational control of the Air Force, should be part of the Air Force today. Its men should be in blue, wearing the same uniform. A.A. Command people work with the Air Force on the same stations, and in the same operations rooms. Yet there is divided control, a general commanding the Command, although it comes under the control of the Royal Air Force so far as operations are concerned. More economy and efficiency could be effected if that Command were transferred to the Air Force.

I have referred to the production of bombers. This small country has many military disadvantages. We have a comparatively small population beside countries like America and Soviet Russia, and we have, furthermore, a most difficult geographical position. However, we have very definite assets of which we should make use. We have the best scientific brains in the world. Anybody who tells me that the Americans are ahead of us in the scientific world is completely wrong. We have the scientists here who invented radar, discovered penicillin, and invented other things. Given encouragement and the right lead, we could teach the Americans much in this direction. We have the capacity for producing very good air crews, with Empire co-operation, with training in Canada and Rhodesia.

We should make it clear to the world, and to the Russians in particular, that if they insist in continuing with their present policy of interference we shall make use of those assets in building up our strength to be well armed to defend ourselves against any possible aggressor. Having seen my family serve in the first world war and been in the second myself, I have no desire for another war. All that I have said in this House or elsewhere is that this country should be

well armed to defend itself. Yet, I was singled out by Mr. Vishinsky At Paris as being one of the warmongers. All I can say is that he must be very hard up for ideas to single me out as a warmonger. I think the Minister of Defence will agree with me.

Mr. Emrys Hughes (South Ayrshire) I have a recollection that the hon. and gallant Gentleman made a statement to the effect that we should concentrate our air preparations for an attack on the potential enemy behind the iron curtain. Is there any wonder that Mr. Vishinsky made that statement?

Air-Commodore Harvey All I can say is that that gentleman, as usual, is completely wide of the mark, since I did not say anything of the kind. I suggest that the hon. Member brings the extract from Hansard and quotes it. I never said anything of the kind. When one or two hon. Members were talking about a potential enemy, I said there was only one possible enemy at the moment, and that was Soviet Russia, and that it was better to face up to the fact, but that we did not want to be an aggressor and that we did not want war. I believe that every hon. Member is right to say that this country should be well armed to defend itself against any aggressor.

Mr. Emrys Hughes My recollection is quite clear.

Air-Commodore Harvey The hon. Member is quite wrong. We cannot defend ourselves by sabre-rattling in terms of inefficient Fighting Services. I am delighted to see that the right hon. Gentleman and his Under Secretary are now here, and I hope that the Minister of Defence will pass on to them some of the things which I have said during my speech.

I now come to the question of equipment in the Royal Air Force. I am told —I have not got many sources of information, and I deliberately try to avoid seeking information from my friends in the Service, but some come along to me to tell me certain things because they feel so strongly about them —that the state of motor transport and other equipment in the Service and in Bomber Command in particular is absolutely deplorable. The petrol tankers are old-fashioned and inefficient. If we have old-fashioned petrol tankers and tractors, we shall not have an efficient Air Force. I am told that there are not enough tractors to tow aircraft on to the airfields; and, with a shortage of these and other things it is useless to spend £170 million a year on the Royal Air Force. I am alarmed to think that we have these shortages today.

The supply of aircraft spares is equally bad. Aircraft, I am told, are on the ground for weeks waiting for spare parts to be issued from the stores. I ask the Minister, "Is that so or not?" The most difficult problem is that of instruments. Aircraft instruments have not improved so very much in design, yet they have been sold in vast quantities by the Minister of Supply in the last three years. I am told that the aircraft instruments were sold just to extract the brass on the casings of the instruments, yet recently, in the air operation "Dagger," which took place a few weeks ago, instruments were put into the dashboards of bombers which had a different kind of dial and different graduation and consequently the pilots suffered fatigue and were worn out long before the completion of eight or nine hours of flying. That is not the way to have an efficient Air Force. I hope that steps are being taken to remedy that situation. I am told also that there is a shortage of spares for the Meteor IV and the latest Mosquito. I know, from my own experience of operating civil aircraft, that unless there is a good spares background we shall have aircraft sitting on the ground almost indefinitely, because the moment one gets one spare part for a machine, something else goes unserviceable, and the machine cannot fly. The Americans, on the other hand, are well supplied with spare parts for their B 29's. We know that they have the resources and the money to back up their spares organisation, but I would rather see a small Air Force, well-equipped and well-serviced, ready to go into battle if need be, than a large Air Force sitting on the ground unable to fly.

Much has been said about the Berlin air lift. We all congratulate the Royal Air Force on the part that they have played, but I have not heard one word said for the small air charter companies working alongside the Air Force, and making

their contribution in flying food and coal into Berlin. They are working today as a team. I hope that the Government will, in due course, pay their recognition to the personnel of the charter companies for the part which they are playing. The Royal Air Force in this effort is lacking men and equipment. I hope that Bomber Command will not have to be drained of men too much because, if that happens, we shall be achieving exactly what the Russians want—that is to divert the Bomber Command effort to the Berlin air lift, which will weaken that particular Command.

I would ask that more attention should be paid to the Royal Air Force Reserve and to the Auxiliary Air Force. I want to see better equipment given to the Royal Air Force Reserve, and more aerodromes made suitable for the Auxiliary Air Force to operate modern fighters. I believe that one volunteer is as good as three National Service men. Perhaps we have got to the stage where we want something between our idea of the prewar volunteer and the regular. I would pay him such as to make it attractive to get him down to the aerodrome, or his town headquarters, two or three times a week, because that would still be a very cheap investment for the Government. They have no pension liability, and they will get as much enthusiasm from the volunteer as from the regular. I believe that today we have to give men more remuneration; it is not patriotism alone which will get them into the Air Force Reserve. I think that the Government should give that matter full consideration.

I would like to ask the Minister what is being done about the defence of the Empire. We had recently a conference of the Prime Ministers of the British Empire; but was anything really agreed about defence measures? Are we insisting on some amalgamation of our plans and forces? I know that there is an interchange of officers and men at regular intervals, but I would like to see much more than that, if it can be accomplished. I would like to get far more men over here from the Dominions and send more men from this country to the Dominions so that they could work together as they did during the war.

I am convinced that today we are not getting value from our fighting Services; anything but. Many of the young National Service men in the Royal Air Force are wasting their time. Many of them seem to get leave just when they want it. When one speaks to them—and even allowing for the exaggeration of these young men—they say that they are doing very little work. That needs to be tightened up in order to get the best out of these National Service men. There is one other point which I wish to put to the Secretary of State. In the Royal Air Force, before it is too late, he ought to promote the young men who have outstanding war records—men now perhaps in their forties who have gone down one or two ranks to keep the older hands there who have been in the Service since 1910 or 1911. They are very fine officers, but this is a young man's Service. If a young man is not fit to command at the age of 40 in the Royal Air Force then he never will be. I ask the Minister to see that these young men get their chance now. It is the young men whom we want to see running the operational Commands.

Without an efficient Air Force and one of sufficient size, I believe that this country is going to be in most serious trouble. We can discuss economic plans and all the rest of it, but if nothing is done in this direction we shall not get the break which we did in 1940. I beg the Government to give this matter their serious consideration and not to pass it off with a little paragraph such as is contained in the Gracious Speech. We want real action, value for our money and services of which we can be proud.

5.18 p.m.

Mr. Bing (Hornchurch) Behind any discussion on the Gracious Speech from the Throne there is the raucous echo of the deplorable speech from Llandudno. I am very sorry that the hon. and gallant Member for Macclesfield (Air-Commodore Harvey) did not deal a little with the strategic consequences of the theories so glibly put forward by the right hon. Member for Woodford (Mr. Churchill) three or four days ago.

Today the right hon. Member for Woodford has told us that we really ought to discuss all these things in Secret Session. If his behaviour is any criterion then he would tell us nothing at all in Secret Session, for it seems that the

more the publicity, the more he says. He said a great deal more in his Llandudno speech which was broadcast to the United States. I know that the right hon. Member for Warwick and Leamington (Mr. Eden) will correct me if what I say is wrong. I think that the speech of the right hon. Member for Woodford was broadcast to the United States from Llandudno; and now that the right hon. Member for Warwick and Leamington is here I would remind him of one of those prosy lectures which he sometimes delivers to hon. Members on this side of the House as to how they ought to behave. Speaking of the hon. Member for Gateshead (Mr. Zilliacus), together with other people, including myself, he said: "There has been in the past a tradition among hon. Members of this House that when we are abroad, although we speak freely on international affairs generally, we seek to avoid criticising our own Government. That seems to me to be, generally speaking, a good rule. But, however that may be, it seems to me utterly indefensible that hon. Members should use foreign Press agencies, not only to attack the leaders of the Government, but also to make violent charges against a friendly nation—the United States of America."—[OFFICIAL REPORT. 21st October, 1947; Vol. 443, c. 19.] Well, is there any difference in using a foreign broadcasting net to make an attack on another friendly nation? Will not the right hon. Gentleman perhaps give one of his lessons in good taste to his right hon. Friend?

Colonel Gomme-Duncan (Perth and Kinross, Perth) Which right hon. Friend?

Mr. Bing There was talk later on at Llandudno of balance of payments. I hope that at any rate hon. Members opposite got the right dollar return for the time taken up by the right hon. Member for Woodford. If they did, it would perhaps be interesting to know how many cents per word the denigration of this country was worth on the American air. Since we are talking of good taste, perhaps I might be permitted this observation. I have been looking round this House, and seeing hon. Members who served in the war—as a number of us did—and wondering how many of us would have been here but for the great sacrifice made in blood by the people of the Soviet Union. When I think of that, I think it is in the worst possible taste to indulge in the sort of talk in which the right hon. Member has been indulging.

Brigadier Medlicott (Norfolk, Eastern) Might I ask the hon. Member a simple question? Has he ever listened-in to the broadcasts from Moscow?

Mr. Bing I am considering the using by the Conservative Party of time on the American air to make an attack on a friendly Power.

Colonel Gomme-Duncan What friendly Power?

Mr. Bing The Soviet Union. [Laughter.] Very good. Laugh if you like. At any rate, the attitude of the right hon. Gentleman is not dictated by any consideration of humanity. We have heard a great deal about humanity and the starving people of Berlin. What happened when we were faced with the starving people of Spain? What happened when they were fighting for democracy and liberty? What did hon. Members opposite do then? Mr. Duff Cooper as he then was, a Member of the Government of which the right hon. Member for Warwick and Leamington was also a Member, when men and women were struggling in the water within sight of British ships and a direction was sent not to rescue them, said, dismissing this: "We have been told of people drowning near the shore in territorial waters, and we are asked whether we can complacently think of His Majesty's ships within reach of these people not going into territorial waters and rescuing them. It is not pleasing for neutrals to watch the sufferings of those taking part in war and refusing to intervene, but it is part of a sound policy that they should not interfere."—[OFFICIAL REPORT, 26th October, 1938; Vol. 328, c. 72–3.] Somebody on another occasion, mentioned common humanity. What did Mr. Duff Cooper say of common humanity? He said: "That is the most useless suggestion I have ever heard. Common humanity in this case would mean firing on the Spanish ship, entering into the war, and risking the lives of British sailors for a cause which not one man in this country off those Benches thinks worth fighting for. 'Saving women and children' blurs the right hon. Member. The same demand might have been put up by some enthusiastic pro-German in the United States in the War, insisting on the United States carrying supplies to Germany, when we were blockading that country, and saving the women and Children."—[OFFICIAL REPORT, 22nd July, 1937; Vol. 326, c. 2577–8.]"

So much for their humanitarian motives. Perhaps hon. Members think I have spoken a little heatedly, but I happened to be on the North Coast of Spain myself at the time and experienced at first-hand the practical humanity and practical regard for democracy of hon. Members opposite.

But this is not a thing one ought to tackle on an emotional basis. We should just look and see what the right hon. Member for Woodford did suggest at Llandudno. If he is reported correctly in "The Times," he said: "We ought to bring matters to a head and make a final settlement," and he suggested that we should make this final settlement by threatening the Soviet Union with the atomic bomb. Now, if a threat means anything at all there has got to be some possibility of carrying it out. Let us just look and see what would be the consequences to this country, first if such a threat were to be carried out, and secondly, if we had even to make preparations for trying to carry it out.

Mr. Molson (The High Peak) We are, as a matter of fact, discussing the Gracious Speech from the Throne and not the speech that was made at Llandudno by my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Bing I can quite understand the hon. Member's reluctance to discuss the speech of his right hon. Friend, but I think that as soon as possible we ought to say one or two things about that speech. Let us see what the most optimistic of the American scientists say. The most optimistic is Dr. Oppenheimer who suggests in the "Bulletin of Atomic Scientists" of December, 1947, that he reckons it ought to be possible to eradicate more than 40 million people in the Soviet Union and surrounding countries by the use of atomic weapons. Having heard what the right hon. Gentleman was saying about the deaths of 400,000 people, it should be remembered that he was suggesting a policy which should be based on the deaths of 40 million people. But, of course, such destruction is thought by other scientists to be a rather exaggerated figure. They point out—I think possibly rightly, although I am not an expert on these matters—that this would have to be done by using radioactive poisons as well as atomic bombs, and that radioactive poisons, from their very nature, are inclined to attack and affect older people and children more than they attack the men of military age, and therefore the actual loss of persons of military age and of working people is not so great as it might otherwise be.

In any event, if this mass slaughter were possible, it probably would not even have the strategical results which the right hon. Gentleman hopes from it. It would result in what? About 13½ per cent. loss of life. In Yugoslavia, to take one example, there was a loss of life of 12½ per cent. of the population, not selected in this indiscriminate way recommended by the right hon. Member for Woodford, but by the cold and calculated murder of working people who were selected victims of the Nazis. The atomic bomb may kill a considerable number of people, but so far as can be seen, it is not, in many ways, as effective a weapon as high explosives. Examination of the United States Strategic Bombing Surveys shows that 74 per cent. of the industrial capacity of Hiroshima could have been put in working order again within 30 days, and that the railways were running through the town within two days after the dropping of the bomb. So on that basis the atomic bomb has not really got all the advantages which the right hon. Member claims for it.

There are also great technical difficulties. I recommend to hon. Members opposite a very interesting review, contained in the American "Saturday Evening Post" of 11th September, by two Washington correspondents, Joseph and Stewart Alsop. They examine in detail the American plan for an atomic war. Among other points they say that one of the difficulties which they are up against in bombing the Soviet Union is this: "Obviously there are very many other difficulties to be overcome—such as the absence of accurate maps of Russia—before the absolute weapon can be delivered to Soviet targets." The "absolute weapon" is, of course, the term used for atomic bombs and poisons of various sorts. Well, does not that make rather nonsense of the principal complaint which the right hon. Gentleman made against the Soviet Union?—for he finally worked up to this in his speech: "Above all, let them open their vast region to the ordinary travel and traffic of mankind." If in newspapers there is being published an article saying, "The only difficulty we have in bombing you, Russia, is that we do not quite know where to drop the bombs," and if at the

same time the right hon. Gentleman is coming forward and saying, "Look how unreasonable they are; they will not allow us to go and visit every town," does not that passage in that speech seem rather nonsensical?

But I do not think that the immediate problem before us is what would happen in an atomic war, or who would ultimately be the victor. Much the more interesting problem so far as we are concerned is what would happen to us. I should like to say categorically—and in a few moments I will give the House my reasons for saying so—that, irrespective of the outcome of such a war, the first atomic bomb that is dropped in a war means, for all practical purposes, the end of this country. Even if these bombs are not dropped the active preparation for such a war—and I will give the facts and figures in a moment—would destroy our economy and reduce us to the lowest economic level.

Let me just put the problem to hon. Members in the way in which the American strategists see it. They look at their problems of defence as other countries do. I make no comment and no condemnation. They look at them as a game of chess and regard countries as various pieces which may or may not have to be sacrificed. Members may think that that is an extreme thing to say, but it comes from a document entitled "Navy Thinking," which is one of the documents of the United States Forces presented to Congress. This is what it says: "In this respect, the advance bases"—they are speaking of this country as being one of these advance bases—"may be likened to pawns in front of the king on a chess board; meagre though their power may be individually, so long as they exist and the king stays severely behind them, he is safe." If one looks at the American Army's way of thinking, one finds that this same argument is being put forward. They say that allies are of value because they give time; they will be over-run, but they give time.

"From a political point of view then, of vital importance to counteract our loss of the cushion of time is a need for allies." The second principle of American defence, which is a right one, is to conserve as far as possible American life. The Americans have a very strong feeling against losing human life. If one reads General Marshall's official report we find him saying: "Staggering as our casualties have been"—But Professor Blackett has calculated that the American war battle deaths were only three times the number of road deaths in the United States during the same period. I am not making any attack on that policy, but merely pointing out that they consider the number of casualties likely to occur in a war will be very small. In America, they have the idea of a sort of push-button war which can be waged very cheaply from bases outside their own country. It is worth while reading what they have to say about bases. I am quoting from the Alsop article: "From Iceland, the United Kingdom and Western Europe attacks may be launched against Moscow, the industrial centres of the Don and Dneiper valleys, and the nearest cities of the Urals—Sverdlovsk, Chelyabinsk and Magnitogorsk. But the Ural cities and Baku will be at extreme range." "From the North African littoral between Tripolitania and Suez, all Central Russia may be attacked, and the entire Ural area and Baku will be within easy range." "From the Arabian sheikdoms and protectorates—Aden, Trucial Oman and Kuwait—and from Pakistan the new Siberian industrial complex, including Novosibirsk, Stalinsk, Krasnoyarsk and Komorovo, will be vulnerable, together with Baku and the Ural complex." "From Japan and Okinawa, Vladivostock and the Amur River cities are vulnerable, and by staging in China the Novosibirsk—Stalinsk complex can be brought into range." Let us look at this thing without emotion. Troops have to be found to guard these places and prevent them from being over-run. If we look at the American plans, we find that they have 12 regular divisions, plus six divisions of the National Guard, which are Territorial divisions, and that they will have seven more divisions which will be ready after six months, making 25 divisions in all. All these will be entirely occupied in the Far East. And so we shall find ourselves vulnerable on two scores. We shall be the central pool for manpower to fight the war. We can see this from the documents published in America. It is unfortunate that some of them have not been published in the British Press, which would have enabled us to have had an informed discussion on the problem. Secondly, we shall have the bases here from which the atomic weapons are to be launched. Therefore, this country is rendered extremely liable to attack on these two scores. There is no getting away from it, because once these absolute weapons are used, other absolute weapons can be used in reply. These may be bacterial weapons. I recommend to the House the Journal of Immunology of May, 1947, which discusses the question of bacteriological warfare. The authors of the article on this type of warfare say: "Airborne and vector-borne disease agents are considered to be of greatest potential usefulness because

of the comparative ease with which they can be disseminated, and the relative impotence of standard sanitary measures against them." The authors go on to say, since they are dealing with their researches only up to 1943: "It will not escape the informed reader that in a striking number of cases technical developments discussed as possibilities in this paper have already become realities." From one cubic centimetre of psittacosis virus, which causes a disease that occasionally springs up in civilian life, 20 million lethal doses can be produced. It is thought that if the virus is sprayed from a bomber it would have an efficiency of about .01 per cent., but even so it would produce a very heavy casualty rate. When people talk in the terms of the right hon. Gentleman, it is threatening our own country with this sort of retaliation which will be directed here, to where the bases are and not to where the atomic bombs are made.

When one considers the actual forces which the American strategic papers say we ought to have to defend the Rhine, we find that Western Union should provide 45 divisions, but everyone knows from the American Press that there are only 15 divisions, in fact, available, of which eight are French and not properly equipped. This is the time when the right hon. Gentleman says that we should have a show-down now and that we should be prepared to go into a war.

How are these divisions to be equipped? They might be equipped from America or from here, but if they are equipped from here we shall have to turn over our whole resources to war production and our whole economy goes to pieces. We could equip them by some form of Lend Lease, as was suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for East Coventry (Mr. Crossman), but that is not so easy as it seems. It would involve the people of America not only in higher taxes at a time when both parties are fighting an election with pledges to reduce them; secondly, it would involve the reimposition of controls and priorities in the U.S.A.; thirdly, equipping Western Union would compete with the re-equipping of existing American divisions. Are we to have forces supplied under these terms? If not, what nonsense it is for the right hon. Gentleman to say, "Let us have a show down now."

If we are going to prepare for atomic war, there is the equally big problem of building bases. There are comparatively limited supplies of bombers which can be used for this purpose. Their use involves building very large airfields with runways nearly two miles long and capable of sustaining an aircraft weighing 25 tons. Germ-proof and atom-proof shelters for hangars and personnel would also have to be built, which would take the greater part of our steel production and would require nearly all the cement we need for building at the moment.

Let me leave the right hon. Gentleman and ask my right hon. Friend a number of questions. Have we really got either the economic or military strength to fulfil all our commitments? It is very wrong to judge the cost of our Forces merely by looking at the figures in the Budget. I should like to know whether my right hon. Friend agrees with the Oxford University statistics that for every man employed in the Forces we lose £500 worth of production. If that is so, then up to the moment we are losing £540 million of production.

But when we look at the Forces from the point of view of the balance of payments, the situation is even more serious and difficult. The overseas cost of our Forces, according to the Balance of Payment White Paper, is £76 million this half year. That is over 10 per cent. of our total receipts from exports and re exports. Our net takings under the Marshall Plan are less than £200 million, so in foreign currency alone our defence is costing, at the present rate, almost as much as we are receiving in aid. The cost is likely to increase. At present, we are gaining a great amount from the sale of war surplus stores. We have gained, from that source alone, £56 million in the first half year of this year, or twice as much as the £27 million, which was budgeted for. This £56 million is equivalent to half our profits from shipping—a very considerable item. Not only are these war surpluses being used up, but when we have stronger defences, they will not be available for sale and we shall lose that amount in foreign exchange.

Even more serious is the drain on manpower. Let me give one example, from Malaya. The Foreign Secretary speaking on 15th September last, said: "It is our aim to provide every estate as soon as possible with the maximum number of trained and armed defenders, quite apart from the regular police and the military."—[OFFICIAL REPORT, 15th September, 1948; Vol. 456, c. 94]" I wondered how many estates there were in Malaya, and I put a Question to the

Colonial Secretary. I had a courteous reply, saying that he was writing to the Governor to discover the answer, but I have not heard yet what that answer is. I have done my best to find it, and there appear to be 2,300 registered rubber estates alone in Malaya with an area of over 100 acres. They probably average 1,000 acres each in size. I do not know what number of trained and armed defenders will be required, but suppose it is half a section for each estate. To fulfil that commitment we need 16,000 men. Our recruiting figures for the second quarter were 15,615 men. We cannot continue to draw these blank cheques on our manpower.

The House ought to consider whether these problems are soluble within our own economic strength. Even if it is possible to get the men, military power is ineffective when it is not backed up by economic strength. In Greece, we maintain troops, but because we are no longer in a position to finance the Greek Government, the changes in the Government there do not take place when the Minister of State visits Athens. They take place at the suggestion and under the guidance of the American authorities, because they are paying the bill. Our troops do not influence the state of affairs there at all. The same is true in Germany. We cannot afford the economic costs there, and so we have to give way, in the making of economic plans, to those people who can.

History is full of examples of great Powers which were destroyed, not by war but by attempts to maintain themselves by keeping military forces beyond their strength. Spain, Holland and France disappeared in turn as great Powers, because each tried to be militarily strong in every element and in every place. This country succeeded where others failed because we maintained a different policy. We tried to be strong, not in every place, and in every element, but in only one element—the sea. The development of air power has altered strategic conceptions, and there must be some modification of that policy, but our strength depends on our modifying it and not abandoning it. At present, we are trying to be strong everywhere and in every element, and history shows that that is the road to disaster. There is still time to draw back and return to our traditional defence policy. But the economic sands are running out; time is getting short.

5.45 p.m.

General Sir George Jeffreys (Peters-field) I do not think it is necessary for me to elaborate the point that for us, armed strength is vital in order to support our national policy and the United Nations' policy. It is not necessary, either, to elaborate the point that no Power respects weakness. As I said once before, our three Services are, in fact, one, and each one is complementary to the other two. This fact was recognised by the creation of the Ministry of Defence, and I hope the Minister, if he speaks tonight, will not appear, as he did last year on one occasion, to represent only one of the three Services.

I wish to devote my remarks to the Army, leaving the other two great Services to be dealt with by those Members who have served in them, although I yield to none in my desire for their efficiency and welfare. It is essential that these two great Services—the Navy and the Air Force—should have a proportion of their Forces ready for action at very short notice. The same applies to our ground air defences. We are short of information about the Services. No details are published, and very little is told us in this House. Nor is there any indication in the Gracious Speech of the steps which the Government propose to take to strengthen the Services.

I am well aware that in war, security considerations are supreme, and that it is necessary to withhold information about the number and disposition of our Forces. I suppose it may be argued that this is also the case in a "cold" war, such as is prevailing now, but surely intelligence services keep foreign Powers informed of our strength and resources. Anyhow, many particulars about our weakness were given to the House by the Minister of Defence nearly a year ago. I believe that more information should be given us today. I would remind the House of the definition given by one of our leading soldiers of the First World War—there are two kinds of war for which it is possible to prepare, successful war and un-successful war. The first is very costly indeed, and the second is utterly ruinous. It is for successful war that we must organise. Let us not economise at the expense of the Armed Forces, for defeat means that industry is

ruined and social services become non-existent. Let us remember the old proverb, "If you want peace be prepared for war." That policy is by far the cheapest in the long run.

Have we any plan of organisation for the future? Have we any plan for rapid expansion on mobilisation? Is there any plan for Empire co-operation, especially in the distant regions, for instance, in the Far East? Have the professional heads of the Services submitted plans or have they been told that they have to make the best of what the Government allow? What supplies have we? Can we be given any idea of what supplies we have of guns, tanks, ammunition and equipment generally? Has it been borne in mind that the services of the gallant and efficient Indian Army are now lost to us? I wonder where we should have been without that Army in the last two wars and what it would be worth to us now in Malaya. Our Forces are dangerously small compared with those of other Powers and compared with our responsibilities in the world today. We should remember that improvisation is useless and unduly expensive and always results in unnecessary loss. We must have adequate preparation, organisation and training.

On paper and in fact the numbers of our Army are very considerable, but what is our strength in trained men, organised in fighting units and formations? Have we, in fact, a single division fit for service? Most Regular units, even those overseas, are now mere training schools for conscripts who come to them with a few weeks' service and who, under the National Service Act, with its very inadequate one year term, will pass out to Reserve just as they begin to become useful, leaving in the units a residue of recruits with three to nine months' service. We have hardly a unit with a complement of trained men and, because no others are available, many men are put to garrison or regimental employment before they are even half trained. What are our Reserves? How many demobilised men realise that they are liable to recall or are given any proper warning of their liabilities on mobilisation? Were they warned of their liability of recall? And yet an Army without Reserves is about as much use as a man with only one leg.

The reduction by half in the number of our Regular infantry battalions was a very great mistake and ought to be rectified. Infantry is still essential, not only for following up and supporting armoured forces but also for holding and defending ground and positions. Moreover, there is still some ground and there are still some obstacles which are traversable only by infantry. Apart from that, the occupation and pacification of conquered territory must mainly be done by infantry as, for example in the case of Germany and Austria today. I suggest that the surviving Regular battalions should be reconstituted as service battalions and should be re-organised into brigades and divisions, while battalions in what I believe is euphoniously called "suspended animation" should be revived as training battalions, with low Regular establishments but capable of expansion for service on mobilisation.

If an adequate number of Regular personnel are to be obtained, their pay and conditions must be made sufficiently attractive. I believe that applies to all the Services, and especially is it so in the case of officers, warrant officers and noncommissioned officers who are needed as instructors. Many such men are now really very hard up indeed, especially the married ones, who can have no settled homes, who have many moves and who very often have an undue amount of foreign service to carry out. Their pay has not risen in proportion to the rise in the cost of living and the fall in the value of the pound sterling. Their allowances are not always adequate and the system recently introduced of deducting Income Tax from allowances—allowances which are given for specific purposes, such as the provision of living accommodation and so forth—has hit them very hard indeed. This system of giving with one hand and taking away with the other, which, I fear, is dear to the Treasury, is very detrimental to both the pockets of those who are hit by it and also to the prospects of getting an adequate number of people to take their places.

Lastly, the pay of Regulars should be higher than that of National Service men. So far as officers are concerned, it must be remembered that the class which served with small pay and spent their private income on their regiments has passed away. In justice to those officers who have retired, and also to those other ranks who have retired, reasonable adjustments should be made in the scale of their pensions and retired pay and in the scale of their disability pensions. If we do that, it will give a great deal of confidence to those who are now serving.

When they consider what their treatment will be at the end of their service.

The next thing which must be faced by the Government, and I hope will be faced by the Government, is that the period of service with the colours of National Service men should be not less than 18 months. A period of one year is definitely insufficient, both for adequate training and for keeping unit strengths in trained men at a reasonable figure—in other words, for keeping units reasonably fit to undertake anything beyond recruit training. I realise that for these measures some compensating economies ought to be made and I suggest that these should be on staffs, services and Departments which do not contribute to the organised fighting strength of the Army or which contribute to that fighting strength only indirectly; for instance, unless I am much mistaken, administrative staffs at the War Office and Commands are still swollen above peace-time scales.

There is also the question of requisitioned buildings and land. There are large numbers of requisitioned buildings and there is a large quantity of requisitioned land which ought to be released and which are costing money, unnecessary money, at this time. There are also non-combatant or semi-combatant corps and branches of the Services. Some of these, I suggest, might be recruited on Militia or Territorial lines, which would result in reduced expenditure; and all might be reduced in numbers and, I believe, in cost. Some might disappear. Reductions of this kind were effected in 1920 and 1921 as a result of the Geddes Committee, which we all remember. Its recommendations were not all popular but, on the whole, it did effect very necessary reductions without undue detriment to the efficiency of the Services. I suggest that similar economies might now be made. I would suggest that the R.E.M.E. and the R.A.O.C. might be enlisted to a certain extent, as regards skilled men, on Militia or Territorial lines, with reduced Regular establishments. Possibly something in the same way might be done with the R.A.S.C. I believe that the Pioneer Corps which is entirely an excrescence of the last war and is definitely not a fighting unit, except in the case of emergency, ought to be substantially reduced.

I suggest that the Education Corps ought to be reduced and that no attempt ought to be made to give a university education in the Services. Education should be only up to the first class certificate, sufficient to enable the recruit or the young soldier to assimilate the Army duties which he has to learn. Again, I would remind the House that the corps was reduced from a swollen establishment such as it has now by the Geddes Committee in 1921, with no adverse result.

The Catering Corps ought to be abolished. We got on very well before the war with the Central School of Cookery which gave admirable instruction in cooking. Is there really a necessity for a corps, with all its expensive headquarters, record offices and so forth in order to provide cooks for the Army? Public relations departments should go, too. I do not believe that they are of the slightest use and they are certainly not popular in the Army. They would not be regretted in any sort of way, and they cost money. I suggest that what remains of welfare organisations should go. Welfare was very necessary at one period of the war when a lot of new units were brought into the Services and scattered in small detachments all over the country. The best welfare work was done by unpaid, retired officers, who worked very hard and did most admirable things. Now this is not necessary. Welfare always was and is the business of the commanding officers and of the administrative staff. Welfare organisations outside those ought to go.

Next, I believe that what are usually known as "Wosbees"—War Office Selection Boards—have served their time and might very well be reduced. I do not think they are popular or that there is much confidence in them. There is at any rate a prevalent view in the Services that psychiatrists have a great deal too much say. They occupy large country houses. I am told that for about a dozen aspirants for commissions going through at a time, there is a staff all told of something like 70 to look after them. They cost money and they can be perfectly well done without. The old system of interview by a board of experienced regimental officers might very well take their place.

I suggest that the military police should be reduced. Their numbers were enormously increased during the war but they might very well be reduced now. I do not say done away with, but reduced. I suggest that women military police

—you see women military police walking about the railway stations in London now—most emphatically ought not to be kept up in peace-time. Many of them were very useful in their spheres in war-time, but I think they are now redundant.

Lastly, there is the Women's Royal Army Corps. They performed splendid war service, but it is sometimes forgotten that they were originally the Auxiliary Territorial Service, raised on territorial lines, and consequently involving the minimum of expenditure and the minimum of taking women permanently from civil life. Is an expensive regular establishment necessary for that corps now? I know for a fact that the A.T.S. clerks were absolutely first-rate on mobilisation, directly they came in. They were skilled clerks and they played an important part in that avocation. They did not require very much training in the work, and the territorial scale of training was quite enough to fit them into the general scheme of the Army. I suggest that it might very largely now become a territorial service, as indeed the anti-aircraft gun members are now.

I suggest that these are economies and reductions which might well be made without affecting at all strongly anything of value in the organisation of the Army. I say nothing about the Territorial Army, except that I and many other hon. Members on this side of the House—and I am sure on both sides of the House—wish to support the movement most wholeheartedly to recruit the Territorial Army. I personally have done what I could. The only thing which might at all have deterred me, after being asked by the Secretary of State for War to help with the recruiting for the Territorial Army, was the abuse that he thought fit to shower upon the Conservative Party and upon its leader.

There are two other points to be borne in mind. We are told that there will be a Bill to reconstitute Civil Defence. I hope that the experience gained in the recent war will be drawn upon to see that Civil Defence is efficient. There were undoubtedly mistakes made during that war, and they should be eliminated. It will be well to have in reserve something in the way of a skeleton force performing the duties of the Home Guard. I hope that the Government will take some notice of the suggestions which I have ventured to make and that in any case we shall be vouchsafed a great deal more information about the Services than we have so far been given in this House.

6.7 p.m.

Mr. Bramall (Bexley) I want to turn the Debate to the subject of the Western zones of Germany. I do not wish to follow the hon. and gallant Member for Petersfield (Sir G. Jeffreys) in his efforts to disinter the Geddes Axe and to apply that implement to the Army services as a method of reducing those services to a prehistoric state and abolishing all the improvements which have been made in them in the last few years.

The Leader of the Opposition, in one passage of his speech this afternoon, referred to the necessity to win the soul of the German people for democracy. I do not think the events which are occurring in Berlin today, all-important as they are, should blind us entirely to the importance of what is happening in that other part of Germany which is our responsibility, namely, the British zone and the joint Anglo-American economic zone of which it forms a part. I believe that it would not be an exaggeration to say that the vital importance of Berlin lies precisely in the effect of events in Berlin on the rest of Germany and the fact that if we allow ourselves to be driven out of Berlin we should not only be losing Berlin and all that it implies, but should irrevocably be losing the whole of Western Germany for democracy.

The question I want to deal with this evening is how far we have carried out the more positive side of that task, namely, how far we have succeeded in winning Western Germany for democracy. I believe that at the present moment we are in great danger of failing in that task. Undoubtedly, the recent events in Berlin—the effect of our actions in Berlin, the effect of the air lift to Berlin—have been stirring in the extreme and have won us great support from the German people. However, I am afraid one must doubt whether the support which has been won by these events has

been support for the right reasons, and whether we are any nearer winning the German people, winning—as the Leader of the Opposition put it—the soul of the German people for democracy.

I believe that we can only save Western Germany for democracy by convincing the people under our control in Germany that democracy is an effective system which can bring them a better standard of life. So far I am afraid that nothing has occurred to convince them of that. The Gracious Speech mentioned the fact that conditions had improved considerably in Western Germany, and I do not want in any way to belittle the remedial effects of the currency reform in Western Germany. There is no doubt whatsoever—and I have verified this by my own observation last month—that the condition of Germany has improved out of all recognition as a result of the currency reform; that the currency reform has brought about an entirely new spirit; that it has brought new hope to people; that it has taken away, at any rate for the time being, and in conjunction with large amounts of American assistance, the pressing and dire need for food. But this is not enough. That does not constitute democracy. I believe that both on the economic and on the political side far more has to be done, and much that has been done has to be undone.

I would like first to look at the purely economic side of the picture. As the Gracious Speech pointed out, the economic improvement is considerable. Currency reform has filled the shops which were previously empty. However, we must not overlook some serious consequences of that currency reform. We must not overlook the fact that the currency reform once having taken place and prices having been stabilised, there are now signs of a further inflation beginning. Prices are once again beginning to go up. We must not overlook the fact that the workers, the wage earners, and still more the millions of unfortunate people, such as the refugees in Germany, who have nothing but public relief on which to depend, are in the most distressing condition.

I was told by trade union officials, when I was in Germany, that it had been calculated that it was necessary for a man and wife and two children to have an income of 250 Deutschmarks a month in order to cover the ordinary necessities of life, and that something like 30 per cent. of the population had no more than 100 Deutschmarks a month in order to cover the expenses of a family of that size.

The economic policy which has been pursued by the German economic administration of Frankfurt has been in every respect one which the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition describes as "setting the people free": that is to say, controls have been removed, rationing has been discontinued as far as possible, prices have risen sky high. And though the shops are now well stocked with goods, and although to a certain extent that does provide relief for the people in that they know—if by any chance they have come by some money—that they will be able to spend it, it merely confers on the great majority of people the privilege of walking past well-filled windows from which they will have no chance of buying.

Now I stress that this has been the policy of the German economic administration and, formally speaking, one can say that that is no responsibility of His Majesty's Government and no responsibility of this House. If it were possible to say that the lack of control placed upon the German economic administration in carrying out this policy was part of a general policy of allowing that administration to go its own way, to make its own mistakes if necessary, then I would commend that policy; I would say that even though I disagree with that economic policy, it was probably the wisest thing to do in order to give the German politicians the responsibility which they must undertake if democracy is ever again to be a living reality in Germany.

In fact, that is not the case; in fact, there have been many interferences with the German authorities and with the way in which they have been allowed to carry out their duties. Therefore, I think it is unfortunate that those respects in which there has been no interference have been precisely those which have placed a heavy burden on the working people of these zones of Germany. In fact, it is no exaggeration to say that the economic authorities of Frankfurt appear to have been more interested in keeping up prices rather than in bringing them down.

There was a particularly scandalous instance while I was in Germany. The staple diet of the German people at this time, apart from bread, is vegetables. The prices being charged by the German farmers and the German growers generally for vegetables were extremely high, but this situation was relieved by the fact that considerable quantities of vegetables were being imported from abroad, mainly from Holland, and were being sold at lower prices than those being charged by the German farmers. The joint Anglo-American Import-Export Agency, on the advice of the German economic authorities, introduced an ordinance while I was there insisting that imported vegetables must be sold at the market price ruling for German-grown produce. In fact, controls were operated for the purpose of keeping up prices and not for the purpose of putting them down. It seems to me to be a strange form of control which allows the German authorities to do what they like in driving prices up or removing controls which otherwise would have kept them down, but then co-operates with them in action which has the effect of raising prices.

The effects on the workers have been disastrous. The effect is still worse on those sections of the population who have no regular means of income. The millions of refugees in the British and American zones are the most striking example, and it is also true of people such as university students, the great majority of whom are dependent on State scholarships. They have been confronted with the position where the authorities who were responsible for paying them have been left by the currency reform practically without funds.

I admit that this situation is largely one that cannot be avoided when undoing the vast inflation that has taken place; that, to a certain extent, the baby is bound to be tipped out with the bath water when there is so much bath water to be got rid of. But we must be assured that our authorities in Germany are not entirely taken in by the apparent prosperity displayed by the shop windows; that they realise the dangers lying behind this apparent prosperity, and are prepared, if necessary, to force the hands of the German authorities to ensure that these people on whom the currency reform has had a hard effect get some relief in the future. This is all bound up with the question of the faith of the people in democracy. If they see measures being taken which merely have the effect of cutting their throats economically, they cannot be expected to feel any enthusiasm for the political system under which this takes place.

But one respect in which we have a direct responsibility is the partial inflation which is still taking place in Germany; that is, the matter of occupation costs. Today these costs are crushingly heavy, precisely because of the currency reform. I think the view taken by many people before that reform was that it did not particularly matter that the occupation costs in some cases were, perhaps, unduly high. After all, as the Reichsmark was a perfectly worthless piece of paper, it did not matter very much how big were the accounts which were compiled in Reichsmarks; but with the currency reform, the whole situation has been transformed.

Most of the expenses which were incurred by our administration in Germany, and borne on occupation costs, are expenses which have been transferred at the ratio of one to one into Deutschmarks. Thirty-two per cent. consisted of wages, which, of course, are paid at their full value—and, in fact, have been increased, because rises in wages of up to 15 per cent. have been allowed since the currency reform. Furthermore, the occupation authorities, 'generally speaking, did not get their goods and services in the black market and therefore, were paying the normal legal costs for rent, light and transport services, all of which have been transferred at their full value into Deutschmarks. There is, therefore, a crushingly heavy burden now to be borne, not by the inflated budgets which were the result of the former inflated currency, but by the new and reformed currency which yields very slender budgets indeed for the State authorities.

It is somewhat difficult to get accurate figures for occupation costs from the British zone because the British did not hand over the administration of these costs to the individual States, as did the Americans, but had them all controlled till March of this year by a central occupation office, and the figures were kept secret. I think it is accurate to say that from 1946 to 1947 the occupation costs rose from 2,400 million Reichsmarks to 2,700 million Reichsmarks. For 1948 the figure probably, has fallen by something like 10 per cent., but we must remember that, instead of there being, in

fact, a fall of 10 per cent., there is really a very considerable rise, because it is a change from Reichsmarks, with a nominal value of 40 to the £, to Deutschmarks, with the fairly real value of 13 to the £, which is a very different proposition. For the British zone this represents something like an annual cost of £188 million a year, and for the whole of the three Western zones of Germany, which correspond approximately in population with the United Kingdom, of £400 million a year—a very crushing addition to the ordinary governmental costs of running the country.

Many Germans put forward the argument, which I believe to be absolutely indefensible, that if we want to go on keeping our troops in Germany—and the Germans are the last people to suggest we should remove them—we should pay for them. I think that as long as the occupation of Germany continues, its cost must be borne, for the most part, by the Germans, and there is nothing unreasonable in saying so. At the same time, however, precisely because these costs must be borne by the Germans, and because the prosperity of Germany is as much our economic interest as it is theirs; because their deficit, in the long run, has to be borne by us or by the Americans—has to be borne out of the general pool of Western Europe—we must try to do all we can to see that these costs are lowered.

The best way to ensure that those costs are lowered—and incidentally, to help ourselves—would be by seeing that there is a severe reduction in the numbers of our administrative staff, because I believe that every one of the administrative staff we have in Germany brings with him large numbers of German employees. I was astonished by the numbers of Germans employed by Allied administrations in Western Germany. In the British and American zones, taken together, we employ no fewer than 680,000 Germans; that is about the equivalent of our total non-industrial Civil Service in this country, but it is placed on top of a country which already has its full complement of civil servants. It is as though we had placed on top of our Civil Service here a bill for 680,000 additional civil servants and other governmental employees, all to be paid out of the State budget.

Mr. Brendan Bracken (Bournemouth) Is that including the Russians?

Mr. Bramall Those figures are for the Western zones, which have a population approximately equal to ours in this country.

Another very large item which I believe we could cut down is the amount of building we undertake. Much of this building has been ill-considered. There was the famous Hamburg project at which my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Stokes) hammered so long and, in the end, so successfully; but that was an enormous cost both in money and in men and material which should never have been incurred. There have been many cases where houses requisitioned by our authorities have been converted for the use of some kind of British personnel—not once or twice, but three or four times—and each time a new alteration has been required for the new tenants.

We must try to make a special effort to see that we place upon these occupation costs only those demands which are really necessary to ensure that we maintain the necessary controls over Germany and retain the necessary security there. A great deal of what is being done—although I admit it has been pruned and reduced—is still being done on an excessively de luxe scale.

One other item of expenditure borne on occupation costs which I consider should be drastically reduced is the maintenance of displaced persons in Germany. There arises the question whether in equity this should still be a charge upon the German economy. It is true that the majority of these displaced persons first came to Germany through the instrumentality of the Germans, and for the early post-war years there was, no doubt, full justification for the Germans looking after them—they brought them there when they did not want to go, so they had to foot the bill. But I do not think that is the case today. These people are there for one of two reasons: first, because they come from East of the iron curtain and do not like the political systems in those countries. I am in sympathy with those people being maintained, but not by the Germans. I do not think that they are there now through the instrumentality of the Germans. They had the chance of repatriation, but did not want to take it. They had every right not to be repatriated.

But an entirely new factor has been interposed since they were originally brought there by the Germans. They are there now really as refugees, because they do not like the political system in their own country and prefer that of Western Europe. They are not there because of anything the Germans have done. Still more is that the case of a considerable proportion of those in the displaced persons' camps who were not originally brought there by the Germans—people who came *de novo* as refugees from the East. People who may never have been in Germany, have made their way from places such as Poland or Czechoslovakia to seek refuge in Germany, not with the German people, but with the British or the Americans. Although they are seeking refuge with the British or Americans, the cost of their maintenance has to be borne by the Germans because, quite fortuitously, the place where they have had to seek the British or Americans happens to be on German soil. That is a question which should be reviewed, and I believe the International Refugee Organisation is the right body to bear the cost of the maintenance of these people—not the German economy.

I turn from the economic side of the question to the political side. Here I believe the key question is that of giving the German people political responsibility. Today the word "democracy" is a laughing stock. Today the word "democracy" means to these people, not democratic control by their own elected leaders, but the dancing of their elected leaders as puppets of foreign Powers; foreign Powers who act on the whole beneficially. I think the German people realise that, on the whole, they act in what they conceive to be the best interests of the German people; but being governed by someone else in one's own interests, is not quite the same as being governed by the people one elects.

The way not to achieve the conversion of the German people to democracy is the way often prescribed by hon. and right hon. Members opposite, namely, to undo all we have done in the years since the war, to forget all that has happened during and before the war, and allow the Nazis to return to their jobs and leave them to get on with it on the ground that they are the most efficient people. I do not believe that is the right way of doing it. I do not believe it can be justified on the ground so often put forward that we need these people to consolidate the Germans against Russia. Even on that ground it is a poor argument. We hear a great deal about the German-Soviet Pact of 1939. That is rightly raised as a reproach to the Soviet Government, but, let us remember that it took two to sign it. The Nazis were just as willing to shake hands with the Russians as the Russians were willing to shake hands with the Nazis, and I have no doubt that if it suited their book, they would do the same thing again.

The only way in which we are going to consolidate our position in Germany and ensure that Western Germany is a political body which can be relied on to play a healthy part in Western Europe is by giving effective power and authority to the leaders of democratic political parties in Germany and to the elected representatives of the German people. Approaches have been made to this, but I do not believe they are being made fast enough, nor thoroughly carried out. I wish to give one or two instances.

Naturally, there has been in Germany, as in this country, a controversy on the subject of nationalisation of basic industries. But this controversy has taken a rather different form in Germany from that which it has taken in this country. There has not been the clear party cleavage on this subject that there has been here; we have the remarkable fact that a considerable proportion of the party which corresponds broadly to the Conservative Party of this country—the Christian Democratic Union in Germany—supported nationalisation.

In October, 1946, our Foreign Secretary proposed that the basic German industries should be nationalised. Many of us on this side of the House hoped that would be carried out. For various reasons, into which one cannot enter at any length, that did not occur, and I think I understand the reasons. But, it was often said to the German people, "This is for you to decide. You decide whether you want your industries nationalised, or not." In the only places where they could decide that—in their State Parliaments—they set about deciding it. In the Parliament of North-Rhine Westphalia, with a population of 11 million and with all the great industries of the Rhur contained in that State, they

secured a considerable majority for nationalisation. That was in a Parliament where the largest party is not the Socialist Party, but the Christian Democratic Party, and members of all parties voted for that measure.

I was in Germany at the time that this measure was handed to the British Military Governor for his consent. I must say I was horrified, and naturally very many Germans, in particular the German Socialists, were horrified, when that Military Governor—the representative of a British Labour Government—vetoed that nationalisation measure. The ground given for the veto was that it should not be done by one State, but that it should wait until there was a Western German Government, or a Central German Government. The Germans had been invited to deal with this question themselves. It was not their fault that there was no German Government. They decided it in the only forum in which they could decide it and got a majority for it by democratic means. There was a great deal to be said for the argument that it could not be done in one State. But we must recognise, whether we approve of nationalisation or not, that it makes a mockery of democracy if, when the people elect a Parliament and when the politicians who make up that Parliament have put the question of nationalisation in their programmes and have taken a vote on it and gone through the democratic procedure, they are told, "You cannot do it anyway." It cannot be expected that that increases people's faith in the operation of democracy.

That faith was still less increased by the fact that at about the same time as this occurred in the British zone, in the American zone there was another proposal for the setting up of works councils which came before the Parliament of Greater Hesse. This measure was less far-reaching than nationalisation, but one would imagine that if federation is to mean anything—and British and Americans have been strongly in favour of federalisation—the powers of works councils would be a matter which would be dealt with by individual States. A law was passed in this State giving considerable powers to works councils. The American Military Governor vetoed this law, giving as his reason exactly the same grounds as those given by the British Military Governor in North-Rhine Westphalia in regard to nationalisation.

The impression was given that these parliaments had power to do things which the occupational authorities liked, but no power to do things of which the occupational authorities in any way disapproved. I would not for a moment suggest that we should withdraw all control from the German people. Obviously there is a great deal which needs to be controlled. I believe that if we were to withdraw our occupation forces and our control, Germany would very rapidly slide back to Fascism. I believe those controls are necessary, but we cannot expect an advance towards democracy unless we reserve those controls for preventing the abuses we are there to prevent. If we use those controls to hold up any measure we dislike, or any measure we do not think the best possible measure, democracy cannot possibly be effective, because democracy will continue to mean what it means for the ordinary German today, the power to talk, but not the power to act.

I will give a final instance of this. After the currency reform had taken place, a considerable proportion of people's bank balances was blocked. The German economic authorities put forward various plans for the release of those blocked accounts. The joint British and American authorities over-ruled all the advice given by the economic authorities and refused to accept any of the plans put forward. Against the unanimous advice of the economic authorities of Frankfurt, they decreed that part of these blocked accounts should be completely invalidated. This has had a very considerable effect upon the whole credit structure of the country. A great deal of money had been lent to industry on the security of these blocked accounts and the whole of this credit structure was wrecked by this action. I do not know who was right. The Germans may have been right or we may have been right; but the point is that we took this very important financial step without any consultation, and indeed against the proffered advice of the economic administration which we ourselves had set up to be responsible for the economy of the Western zones of Germany.

I do not believe that we can win the German people for democracy by talking to them about democracy and at the same time withholding from them the effective power to guide their own destinies. Therefore, I hope that, if as a result of the consultations going on at the present time in Bonn a Western Government is set up, we shall see to it that that Government is given the power to govern. Control over certain essentials there must be; controls to see that there is no re-militarisation of Germany; controls to see that there is no return to the Nazi doctrine. These controls there must be, but I hope that in the essentials of governing their economic and political life they will be allowed to wield effective economic power.

One matter has disturbed me very much indeed. There have been hints for some time that Germans were being recruited in the Western zones of Germany for military service. In view of the sources from which these hints came, I personally was prepared to disregard them and to assume that they were untrue. But I recently talked to a non-political German and mentioned these fears to him. His reaction was extreme surprise that I did not know all about this, and that I should think that it was anything out of the way. He assured me that in labour exchanges and in factories lists were being passed round on which Germans were being asked to enter their military records and their military experience. I believe that that recruiting was taking place on behalf of the Americans and not of ourselves, but I think that it is extremely disturbing if in fact it is taking place at all in British zones.

However great our dangers in Western Europe and however gravely disturbed we may be, the most fatal thing we could possibly do would be once again to put arms into the hands of Germans. The Germans today are still suffering from the militarism that has been their curse for generations. If we can build democracy in Germany, I believe that they can once again take their rightful place as one of the great nations of Western Europe. But one of the things that for generations has prevented them from playing their rightful part in Western Europe has been this curse of militarism. That has not yet been stamped out. It is extremely difficult to stamp it out in the conditions existing in the world today. If, in order to combat one danger, we were once again to put arms into the hands of the Germans, I believe that when that other danger had passed we should find ourselves once again faced with the other and greater danger which has faced us twice before.

6.44 p.m.

Wing-Commander Hulbert (Stockport) The Gracious Speech foreshadows three main Measures, the Parliament Bill, the nationalisation of the steel industry and Defence. I do not necessarily put them in that order as regards importance, but it is, nevertheless, the fact that it is only those three Measures which are going to affect our future economy and security. The Lord President of the Council in his opening remarks this afternoon criticised the Leader of the Opposition for not having dealt with the other somewhat pedestrian Measures which accompany them. We on this side of the House make it our practice to concentrate on the important things and the things that vitally affect this country.

I wish to make a few remarks about the Territorial Army and the Auxiliary Services. That received scant mention in the Gracious Speech. It says: "the Reserve and Auxiliary Forces will also be built up." It would need more than an Act of Parliament to ensure that that is done. We all know that recruiting for the Auxiliary Forces is not going well. The other day I happened to read in the "Daily Worker" the story of a large and well organised recruiting campaign in a town not far from London, the result of which was that only one recruit was obtained. If that happens there is obviously something wrong. The recruiting campaign for the Territorial Army has gone flat and we must all recognise it. Therefore, let us look for some of the reasons for it.

We have had the unfortunate experience of a speech by the Secretary of State for War which did great harm to the recruiting efforts which many hon. and right hon. Gentlemen are making. That speech was made on a Saturday and on the following Monday there was a meeting of a certain Territorial Association. I can assure hon. Members that it needed all the persuasive powers of the chairman of that association to prevent the whole of the members from resigning en bloc. It would be interesting to know to what extent the various workers councils are backing this

Territorial recruiting effort. We have heard stories of how many organisations who support the Government are not giving their full support and help to recruiting for the Territorial Army. There is at the War Office today a Minister who, unfortunately, has Cabinet colleagues who do not give confidence to the people who want to join the Territorial Army. Men and women cannot be expected to believe that those right hon. Gentlemen have really at heart a desire to get recruits for the Armed Services.

I am glad to say that the Air Ministry is more fortunate. While I profoundly disagree with the politics of the Secretary of State for Air and his Under-Secretary I know that they are doing their best for the Royal Auxiliary Air Force, but for the War Minister to appeal for recruits to the Territorial Army is rather like the Crown counsel at the Old Bailey appealing for recruits to the burglars' union. We must make the Territorial Army and the Auxiliary Forces more attractive. On every side we hear of failure to get control of drill halls and to get drill halls de-requisitioned. The Under-Secretary of State for War knows the story of efforts that have been made for months and years in the Middlesex area to make a certain drill hall available to a commanding Officer for the training of recruits. I am not certain that even today that drill hall is available, despite promise after promise.

I do not altogether blame the War Office. Many of these buildings which are suitable for town headquarters are now in the hands of other Departments. We have to see that the Auxiliary Services have the best equipment and that they have equipment equal to that of the Regular Forces. It is no use having a parade around the streets if the only searchlight, or the only gun or bit of radar equipment has to be taken away from a unit in order to be shown in the parade. The Royal Auxiliary Air Force must have the best jet fighters such as those supplied to the Regular Air Force. I am glad to say that many squadrons are now being supplied with them. I am told that the War Office propose to spend some £35,000 or £50,000 on an exhibition in Oxford Street. I believe that that is a sheer waste of money. It is proposed that the exhibition should be open only when the shopping crowds are there. That sum of £50,000 could be spent in a very much better way.

The pay and bounties of the Regular Forces must be increased. No doubt it would astonish hon. Members to know that the bounty which a Territorial or an Auxiliary Airman gets each year is worth exactly four cigarettes a day. The Minister of Defence looks sceptical, but I assure him that I have worked out the figures. I ask the Government to give a lead in regard to pay while men are at annual camp. That request applies particularly to the nationalised industries. Not long ago in this House I asked the Minister of Fuel and Power what was the policy of the National Coal Board and the Electricity undertakings on the question of giving leave with pay to men and women who attend annual camps. The reply I received was that this was a matter of day to day administration by the boards concerned and the Minister was not prepared to intervene.

Every hon. and right hon. Gentleman in this House must give of his best to stimulate this campaign in the critical days in which we live. The War Office have circularised hon. Members asking what part, if any, they are prepared to play in this recruiting campaign. I do not know what the response has been. All I know is that I signed the form from the War Office and I have not heard anything since then. It may be that the idea is that I cannot be particularly useful.

In conclusion, I suggest that the finest stimulus which the recruiting campaign could have would be if the Government would be big hearted enough to invite my right hon. Friend the Member for Woodford (Mr. Churchill) to give a great broadcast on the subject. I believe that such a speech from him would bring in more recruits than all these small campaigns which are being held up and down the country at such a great expense and with such poor results.

6.54 p.m.

Major Vernon (Dulwich) I propose to follow to some extent the remarks of the hon. and gallant Member for Stockport (Wing-Commander Hulbert) whose speech followed those of the hon. and gallant Member for Macclesfield (Air-Commodore Harvey) and the hon. and gallant Member for Petersfield (Sir G. Jeffreys). All these speakers dealt with

various components of defence. Their purpose was to increase the efficiency of those components. While it is true that the efficiency of a complete scheme cannot be very great if the components are not efficient, it is possible to have a great number of efficient components which do not make an efficient whole. For that reason, I propose to consider the broad aspects of the problem before us rather than any of the details.

We hear talk about defence and the protection of these islands in a vague sort of way; but, with all military preparations, some very definite idea must be in people's minds in order that they can adjust their activities to some general design or plan. It is just no use talking about defence in this vague sort of vacuum. We must consider it in relation to the particular problem. The problem before us has a definite time-limit. In fact, there are two problems. We are agreed now that the greatest danger is the conflict between East and West, between the United States on the one hand, and Russia on the other. The question of their relative equipment arises immediately. The Americans have the atom bomb now: as far as we know the Russians have not. A campaign fought where one side has the atom bomb and the other has not will take a particular form and it will be entirely distinct from a campaign in which both sides have atomic bombs.

I propose to deal only with the first state of affairs. This is an immediate problem. The fact that there is the possibility or probability of the change-over from the one type to the other, brings us into a dangerous period, because there is the tremendous temptation for the side which has the advantage to use that advantage while it lasts. Looking ahead, we must take account of what is in people's minds. We had in the speech of the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Woodford (Mr. Churchill) at Llandudno a phrase which indicates what is in his mind and what I suppose is in the minds of a number of other people. He spoke of "bringing matters to a head." Strangely, I find that same phrase in an American publication. It says: "It is easy for Americans to feel that it might be better to bring the struggle with Russia to a head, and have done with it before the Soviets get the atomic bomb. In England the natural tendency is to put off the holocaust by every practical means, in the desperate hope that perhaps it may not have to come at all." That is an American estimate of the state of things here.

Mr. Emrys Hughes What is the document?

Major Vernon It comes from Robert T. Oliver of 1620, Eye Street, Northwest Washington, D.C.

Mr. Edward Porter (Warrington) What is the name of the publication?

Major Vernon The "Korean Pacific Press." I thought at first that this was published with the intention of bringing news from Korea to Britain. It may be that the idea is to convey a picture of Britain to the Koreans. Whatever its purpose, it is to me rather obscure. I bring it forward as typical in, itself and not as a specially important document. I do not think that anybody would deny the state of affairs which exists in the world. It is one of the things we must consider in looking into the future. We also have some indication of what the Americans are thinking, because they are much more free at expressing in their Press views which we regard as rather confidential in this country. An article which has already been referred to this afternoon was published in the "Saturday Evening Post" of 11th September which claims to put forward the agreements which have been arrived at by the American Service chiefs with regard to activities of their Departments in the future. It is so detailed and fits in so well with the probabilities of the case, that it is fair to take it as a pretty good guide to the strategic plan of the American Service Departments, and the writers claim, that of the State Department also. Among the arrangements which they say are necessary is the following: "Arrangements for overseas bases from which we can strike at the enemies' vitals with the absolute weapons"—"that is the atomic bomb—"in decisive retaliation the moment the first act of aggression is committed." That is an ordinary military state of mind. People may say "We are for peace. We do not want aggression. We are not aggressors ourselves but, the moment aggression occurs, we must strike back with tremendous power." The danger of that is that somebody has to decide when the act of aggression occurs. What may appear to the Russians, let us say, to be a perfectly legitimate action to defend some rightful interest of their own, may appear to the Americans on the spot, and even to

the State Department, to be an act of aggression which demands this immediate and severe punishment. One would say that the Americans should consult all their Allies before any action is taken. The Americans are the big partners in the alliance. It would be rather difficult for the other Allies to start arguing and saying, "We do not think that this is really a sufficiently serious act of aggression for military action to be taken." That would involve delay, and the possibility of the immediate action which the Americans would think necessary for success would be lost. Therefore, the danger is very real and immediate.

Mr. Alexander I hope that the hon. and gallant Gentleman will not press that point of view, because it certainly cannot be related to the very great efforts which the Foreign Secretary and the Americans have made over the Berlin business by endeavouring in every possible way to find a solution.

Major Vernon I do not agree with the Minister of Defence in taking that line. We are here to discuss defence—the matters of peace and war. If the war danger is great—and there have been many speeches in this country and other places to show this danger—I think that I am in Order——

Mr. Alexander I think that is quite in Order.

Major Vernon I will continue. We are in this unpleasant position. There is the possibility of warfare. Our Defence Services must assume that there is such a possibility. Therefore, I propose to go a little further into some of the details. The Americans tell us of their proposals. They assume that the Russians will launch 100 divisions towards the Channel and that this will need 45 divisions, probably on the Rhine, to stop them. I do not know whether they are right in saying the Rhine or whether it would be the Maginot Line. Some people talk about the Pyrenees. They are thinking of an immediate move from their territory by the Russian Army. The article states that they must hit back from prepared bases and destroy the sources of supply of Russian Armies so that, by running short of supplies, those armies will be put into an inferior position and it will be possible to defeat them with numerically smaller forces. The article also says that if 20 cities could be demolished, Russia would lose 99 per cent. of her aircraft production, 60 per cent. of her steel production and 65 per cent. of her petroleum production. The loss of 80 cities would reduce Russia to a smoking desert without industrial output, transport or communications.

Mr. Bracken Who says all this?

Major Vernon This is from the article I mentioned in the "Saturday Evening Post." In this scheme of things they reckon on Britain playing an essential part. The whole tenor of the article is to lead up to the proposal that the Americans must be prepared to spend large sums of money in equipping the British and the other Continental Armies as part of the general war scheme. The purpose of the article is to get the American people into the right frame of mind to face this enormous expenditure. That is the plain story. This state of affairs is pretty horrid but it has the advantage of being pretty definite. It gives us something about which we can talk. If this state of affairs should come about, would the war succeed? What would be the end of it? The Americans assume straight off that they would win. They expect the Russians to give way to them because of the greater power which they would have. Would it happen in that way?

There has been published in the last few days a book by Professor P. M. S. Blackett named "The Military and Political Consequences of Atomic Energy." In that book in which the writer has gathered together all the most important information which bears on the subject of atomic bombs and bombing in general, and the strategic developments of warfare in recent times, Professor Blackett comes to some fairly definite conclusions. They are so important that I think I am justified in giving a brief summary of a few of them to the House as part of our discussion.

He points out, first of all, that the atomic bomb is only a concentrated form of the ordinary bomb, and he gives figures for the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and compares them with the bombing of Tokyo. The weight of bombs

dropped on Tokyo was 1,667 tons. The amount of destruction in areas wiped out was 2½ times that at Nagasaki and Hiroshima together. The number of people killed and missing was greater in Tokyo than in either of the other towns, but just less than the two taken together. This indicates that, although atomic bombing is extremely violent and concentrated, the fact that it is so concentrated does limit the range of its effect.

Air-Commodore Harvey Would the hon. and gallant Gentleman say how many aircraft were used in the raid on Tokyo, as opposed to the other places?

Major Vernon Something of the order of 600, I believe, but I can check up on that.

Air-Commodore Harvey About 100 to one.

Major Vernon Yes. The point I am trying to express is that the extreme concentration of energy at one spot is not always the most effective; that is to say, 1,000 tons in one explosion may do less harm than 1,000 separate tons spread over a whole district. That is one part of the story—that atomic bombing can be related to ordinary bombing. There is great difference in scale, but useful comparisons can be made.

The next stage in his argument is that strategic bombing, as shown in the last war, was extraordinarily ineffective, and, in fact, it appears that the whole conception and practice of the bombing of Germany was one colossal strategic error. The evidence for this comes from the American Bombing Survey, a very detailed document in which we find the figures of the weight of bombs dropped throughout the war and estimates as to the destructive effect of that bombing on the military production of Germany. It was not until 1944 that the loss of war production owing to this destruction amounted to as much as 10 per cent. In the earlier part of the war it was very much less than that. By 1944, the German armies were depleted by casualties, the Russians were already in Poland, the British and Americans were already in France, the German Air Force was almost negligible, the Allies had complete control of the air, and only then did the bombing become really effective in destroying communications, railways, bridges and so on. It did play a most important part after July, 1944.

In general, strategic bombing is much less important than many of us thought some time ago. Why was this? It was because the Germans practised the dispersal of their industries. We found that V2 factories were located in the mountains and in deep forests, with camouflage over the works. The Germans simply spread their factories away from their centres of population, and, by this means, avoided the destruction which they would otherwise have suffered.

How does that affect our story? To understand what the Russians are thinking and are likely to do, we have to put ourselves in their place. Suppose that we were in a country like Russia and had this possible calamity hanging over our heads, with dozens of bases right round our frontiers being prepared with runways and equipment and destined ultimately to launch atom bombs. What should we do with our industries? Last time, to escape the Germans, the Russians transported their industries to the other side of the Urals, and people were astonished by that transportation feat. What will they be doing now? They will distribute their industries in the remote places, and they are in a far better position to do it than the Germans, because they have a thinly-populated country.

From that viewpoint, it would appear that such a war, if it came, would not bring speedy success. Quite apart from the destruction, which would certainly be severe, there is the question of occupation, and there is no sign that the Americans would be able to raise the armies necessary to occupy Russia, and, even if they did occupy that country, we cannot imagine it doing them any good at all. Our occupation of Germany is no advantage to us, but a tremendous drain on our resources.

We can assume, then, that early success is quite unlikely and that a long drawn out war is by far more probable. That is the sort of thing to which we have to face up in considering our own defence preparations. One thing which is

extremely disquieting to me is that we are so closely linked with the United States in these matters. Although the United States is so efficient and powerful on the material side, on the political side it is not nearly so good or so effective. It seems to me that, in this contest between East and West, the contestants are not playing the same game or observing the same rules. It is just as if we had football and hockey teams on the field at once and we were trying to get some sort of orderly conflict between them. The Americans are threatening Russia with the big stick, and Russia is trying to avoid it. Their reply is really a political reply. It is partly deliberate, and partly automatic.

Sir John Boyd Orr has said that hunger is the master of politics, and the great movements in Asia, which seem to some people to be directed by the emissaries of Moscow, would have taken place if Moscow had not been there at all. It is the hunger in China and the economic distress in Malaya and Indonesia which have caused these great movements of population which are affecting pretty well half the world. I have no doubt that the Russians are glad to see this happening. Their avowed aim is the freedom of all mankind from the tyranny of capitalism, and, if this happens automatically, so much the better. Surely, these movements in Asia are due to local discontent only remotely related to the American military threat to Russia. Each is on an entirely different plane. Each is directing her energies towards the same end but without ever coming up against actual opposition. It is something like a fight between a whale and an elephant with the British, possibly, taking the part of Jonah in relation to the whale, though I hope not.

One has to come to some conclusion and see what it is to which we have to look forward. To my way of thinking, the way to fight Communism is not in the military field at all. The reason why Communism particularly in Asia, has met with success is because of the misery of the people, and we have to combat it by getting rid of the misery. There is no other way in these days to tackle poverty efficiently except by large-scale planning and control, and something like Socialism is necessary for the well-being and prosperity of the people and for the large-scale productivity which we require. So the conclusion to which one comes is that the British method of gradual transition from capitalism to Socialism, without violence but with compensation and consideration for other people's interests, is the only road to safety in this very difficult situation which confronts us.

7.15 p.m.

Mr. Boyd-Carpenter (Kingston-upon-Thames) As absolute responsibility for the security and defence of this country in these obviously very perilous times rests upon the party opposite, I am certain that people, not only in this country, but in other countries as well, will have been listening with very close attention to what has been said by hon.

Gentlemen opposite, and it is, from that point of view, perhaps a little unfortunate that, of the three speeches which have been delivered from the opposite Benches since the Lord President of the Council sat down, one of them, the speech of the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Bing), if it amounted to anything at all, amounted to the statement that it was useless to take any steps for our defence at all; that the speech to which we have just listened, if it came to any conclusion, appears to have reached a similar one; while the speech of the hon. Member for Bexley (Mr. Bramall) did not mention it at all.

When we remember that it is upon their shoulders, and upon the shoulders of the Government they support, that responsibility for our defences now rests—for they and they alone have that responsibility—it seems to me somewhat disquieting that this attitude should have been taken consistently by all hon. Members on the other side of the House who so far have had the good fortune, Mr. Speaker, to catch your eye. I hope that is not representative of the attitude of the party opposite, and that some hon. Member will have the moral courage to get up and say so.

I should like to make a short point concerning the speech of the hon. Member for Hornchurch; and I am sorry that he is not in his place. His argument was that all these weapons are so elaborate and so violent that there is no possible defence against them, and that the best thing to do is absolutely nothing. It is no doubt a coincidence that, if we took his advice, it would be very convenient for the friendly Power to which he referred, inasmuch as that friendly Power would find no material barriers in its march, as I believe, towards world domination. I am sure it is simply a

coincidence that his reasoning goes in that direction, but it is completely fallacious reasoning. We have heard it before; we heard it before 1939. Hon. Members opposite, even before 1939, asked "Why do you arm? Is it not so much better not to menace anybody, like Holland and Norway?" That argument proved to have little justification when the aggressor struck those innocent countries. I think the country is entitled to know whether that argument, which hon. and right hon. Gentlemen opposite preached time in and time out before 1939—a pernicious and dangerous argument—is or is not their argument today.

Major Vernon My hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Bing) is not here, but I think it is only fair to say that he has consistently argued for the efficiency of the Armed Forces of this country. The line of argument which the hon. Gentleman is now following is as unfair to my hon. Friend as it is to myself.

Mr. Boyd-Carpenter The hon. Gentleman says this argument is unfair to his hon. Friend and himself. May I put this to him? Whatever may have been the view of both hon. Members in the past, in this Debate, which, as you have indicated, Mr. Speaker, is directed to the subject of defence, neither hon. Member has made a single concrete suggestion for the improvement of our defences. Indeed, they carried their arguments in the opposite direction and suggested that any such concrete measures would be wholly useless. In the face of that, the hon. and gallant Member for Dulwich (Major Vernon) must make up his mind. Is he or is he not in favour of the provision of adequate and efficient defence forces for this country? It is no use trying to straddle that issue; it is no use saying that it is all right having small, weak and inefficient Forces. That is a sheer waste of time, and waste of the taxpayers' money. And let me remind the hon. Member of the lives of the men who are to be sent into battle, ill-equipped and ill-supported. The hon. and gallant Member and others who think like him must make up their minds which side of the fence they are on. I think it would be franker and intellectually more honest, if the hon. Member genuinely believes that, to express that point of view in terms and not to hedge it round by readings from the Pacific Korean Press garnished with some of the saltier extracts from "The Saturday Evening Post."

I can assure right hon. Gentlemen on the Front Bench opposite that it is in no such spirit that I attempt to intervene in this Debate. I intervene only because I am very anxious to put forward one or two concrete suggestions to the right hon. Gentleman the Minister of Defence. I should be very grateful if, when the right hon. Gentleman comes to reply—and since his arrival he has been very constant in his attendance on the Bench—he would indicate either his willingness to accept some of these suggestions, or, if he will not do that, give the reason why he finds them unacceptable.

The first suggestion concerns equally the Ministry of Labour. I would remind the House that the Minister of Labour is Minister of Labour and National Service, and I regret that there is, apparently, no representative of that Department on the Front Bench. As I say, the first suggestion concerns the Minister of Labour at least as much as it concerns the Minister of Defence. It is that, for all the weaknesses in our defence system, of which all hon. Members are very conscious at the moment, we have one great asset which we did not have in 1939—the fact that we have in civilian life some five million men with Service experience, many of them with prolonged battle experience. That asset will remain a potential and not a real asset until arrangements are made administratively to bring that immense potential asset into use very quickly in an emergency. It will be no use, if war should overtake us, simply to broadcast over the B.B.C. that certain groups are called up, whereupon scores of thousands of bewildered men would have to find their way, probably through bombed streets, to some centre of which they had never previously heard.

What is needed—I hesitate to use the word in this House—is a little planning. The Government have always prided themselves on their plans. I suggest that they do a little more planning in the supreme function of government—the organisation of defence. They should consider which of these five million men they are going to call up and which they propose to leave in their present civilian employment. Having done that, they should allocate them provisionally

to specific units, not merely to specific Services, and they should notify those people that, on receipt of a warning over the B.B.C., or in any other form, they should proceed to a particular place in order to join a specified unit.

That, of course, calls for a good deal of hard, administrative work, particularly on the part of the Ministry of Labour. But it calls for very little other expenditure, and it would have an immense advantage, both practically and psychologically. It would have the practical advantage that great forces could be speedily mobilised; it would have the psychological advantage of making any unfriendly Power realise that we mean what the Foreign Secretary has said in the firm declarations he has made. I am certain that foreign statesmen, like most other sensible people, judge us far more by what we do than by what we say.

I realise that there will be great and heavy administrative difficulties in this proposal, but the value to be derived from implementing it is so enormous that I do not think it is fair to put off the House with administrative difficulties. I suggest—and it is a task, primarily, for the Ministry of Labour—that registers should be compiled and decisions taken as to the age groups and occupations liable for service, and provision made for the allocation of the manpower available. If that were done, I am certain it would be an immense advantage.

I would add a supplementary suggestion, which is that, so far as the Army is concerned, any mobilisation on the outbreak of war would call for a phenomenal—many of us feel, an excessive—expansion of staffs, and the organisation of staffs of new formations. Why should not the Military Secretary's Department of the War Office work out on paper the personnel of those staffs, and notify the gentlemen concerned? That, again, would cause those staffs to form much more quickly than they would otherwise be able to do, and would make them more useful at an earlier stage, besides stimulating the interest of the people concerned.

If, for example, a man knew that on mobilisation he would be D.A.A.G. of X Division, he would have an interest in keeping abreast of "A" work and possibly of reading many of the admirable publications which the War Office now puts out, and thus be able to keep up to date. But if a man has no idea whether he will be a member of such a staff or will remain in civilian employment, he is deprived of the stimulus to educate himself in that way.

I would refer once more to what, I am afraid, is my own King Charles' head, because I have urged it annually on His Majesty's Government, and, if opportunity offers, shall continue to urge it until it is accepted. It is that at the moment, when manpower for the Services and manpower for civilian industry are competing severely, the Government are wasting a very considerable amount of trained foreign military manpower available in this country. There are tens of thousands of Poles in England with excellent military experience, and many of them with impressive military records, as any of us who have seen the Polish formations in the field will agree. There are smaller, but still appreciable numbers of Yugoslavs and Czechs whose loyalty and devotion are beyond question. Why cannot those men be allowed to be recruited into a British Foreign Legion?

There are, of course, difficulties of language, but they are difficulties which the French Government in the French Foreign Legion have successfully overcome for 50 years or more. I appreciate how difficult it is for the Government to decide what proportion of manpower should be allotted to civilian industry and what proportion should go into the Forces. At the same time, there is absolutely no excuse for wasting this trained military manpower merely because it happens to be foreign. It seems to be an exhibition of narrow racialism which one would not have expected of hon. Members opposite. It is absolutely indefensible.

During the Summer Recess I saw in Merionethshire some hundreds of able-bodied Poles, whom the Minister of Labour had been unable to place in any civilian employment, hanging about in a camp where they had nothing to do except throw quoits at one another across a net. What is the excuse for saying, when our own defence demands are so great, that because these men are foreigners they shall not be offered the opportunity to enrol under the British Crown? We are entitled to demand an answer on the matter. When I last put the question to the Minister of Defence a

year ago, the right hon. Gentleman's only reply was that it was not the policy of His Majesty's Government. That is only negative praise, and we are entitled to be told whether there are real reasons, and what they are, for this apparent waste of most important manpower.

There is another question which I would press upon the Minister of Defence—I have pressed it upon him before—and that is the question of our antiaircraft defences. The Government's scheme, as we know, is that these should be manned mainly by the Territorial Army, but what is sometimes forgotten is that until the first National Service class leave their compulsory service at the end of 1950 the Territorial Army consists of a very small nucleus of volunteers. How is it intended to bridge the gap until 1951 or 1952 when those men will have come through in numbers adequate to man a reasonable number of defences? Surely we are entitled to insist on being told what are the Government's proposals to deal with that matter during the next three years.

Again we are entitled to urge upon the Government the undesirability of leaving the greater part of our anti-aircraft defences manned by people who are not permanent soldiers. By that I mean no reflection on the personal quality of the men, but I want to make this point clear. In a time of tension such as at the present moment, it may be very desirable that anti-aircraft defences should be, at any rate, partially manned. They cannot be adequately manned, as I understand it, without embodying the Territorial Army, and to embody the Territorial Army would be a drastic step which might have very serious diplomatic repercussions. The Government are, therefore, put in the dilemma of leaving the anti-aircraft defences of this country insufficiently manned in a period of international tension, or of taking a step—the embodiment of the Territorial Army—which may cause deterioration in the international situation. And I think we are entitled to be told how, in the face of that difficulty it can remain the persistent intention of the Government to man the anti-aircraft defences with Territorials.

It is a matter of regret, too, that the Gracious Speech makes no reference to amendment of the National Service Act. I do not believe there is a single Member who can say that the Act in the present circumstances is satisfactory. I appreciate that it does not mainly come into force until 1st January, but the right hon. Gentleman will, no doubt, agree that under emergency powers its provisions are now substantially in effect. There is no single Member who can say that the present position is satisfactory. On the one hand, we have complaints of the inadequacy of the 12-months' period. On the other hand, we have the fact that the Government themselves, on the advice no doubt of the Service Departments, have deferred the call-up of at least 50,000 young men during the coming year because presumably the Services have no use for them. It is clearly an unsatisfactory situation, and it is therefore unfortunate that among the prolonged list of proposed legislation in the Gracious Speech there is no mention whatever of amendment of that Act.

Finally, while the paragraph on Defence in the Gracious Speech sounds agreeable enough, pleasantly phrased and with its hint of mild and agreeable activity, it does not seem to me to contain that note of urgency which the situation demands. Frankly, we have heard the same thing before. We have heard for months that steps were being taken, that in view of the emergency things were being put right and were being improved. It does not seem that, at the end of all that, these words carry the conviction that the Government realise time may be short and that it is their prime duty to see to it that the defences of this country are made really efficient as rapidly as possible. It is not so much what the Speech says, but what the Government do not do which is disquieting.

We feel most strongly that the suave phraseology of the Speech, suitable no doubt for easy times, is a clear indication of the minds of those who drafted it—of minds not yet attuned to the fact that their tremendous responsibility of securing our defences is one which calls for urgent and vigorous discharge. There is not a touch of the drive and force which a few years ago were applied to the Service Departments, not a touch of the dynamic energy of such men as Lord Beaverbrook in the re-equipment of our Forces. There is merely that suave and somewhat strange phraseology: "My Ministers are taking steps to ensure that My Armed Forces shall be efficient and well equipped...." Are they not now efficient and well equipped?— "...and that the best use shall be made of men called up under the National

Service Act.” Is that best use not made now? The Minister of Defence will appreciate, I know, that our criticisms are directed to him and to his administration, because on past form we have the gravest doubts whether even now enough is being done. If he can reassure us on these lines tonight, no one will be more thankful than hon. Members on this side of the House, but the right hon. Gentleman must realise that upon his shoulders in this stormy hour rests a great responsibility for the security, peace and prosperity of His Majesty's Dominions and for the future of the British people.

7.36 p.m.

Mr. Henry Us borne (Birmingham, Acock's Green) I always find it hard to speak in this House, but on such topics as defence I find it even more difficult, when I follow such a speech as we have just heard and the three which preceded it. I find it difficult because I approach these problems from an entirely different and almost totally unconnected plane. I think that if a debate is to be maintained, it is necessary to try to find a bridge, and although I am a civilian anti the last three speeches from the other side have been made by hon. and gallant Members, I remember one statement that I read some time ago which I think does effectively make that bridge. I quote: “A general whose strategy is sound can afford to make tactical mistakes, but no amount of tactical brilliance will save from disaster the general whose strategy is unsound.” It seems to me that the speakers on the other side of the House are thinking in terms of tactics, while I think almost entirely in terms of strategy. For it is better, if it is possible, to have an effective long-term strategy than the best of tactics. What, then, is this long-term strategy to be? Evidently we are now in the process of some form of a war; whether we call it a cold, a tepid or a pretty hot war, I do not mind. In the Gracious Speech it was said that we are “in a troubled world still suffering from the ravages of war” and that “we have been hindered by distrust and dissension between the nations.” That is very evident.

There is one particular point of this dissension I want to talk about tonight. The dissension between the nations has revolved around an attempt to control atomic energy and to outlaw the atomic bomb. For 2½ years this argument has continued. I believe that history will show that never in any century has so much time been wasted and so many useless words been committed to print. The fact is that the atomic bomb cannot be outlawed unless at the same time we can contrive to outlaw war altogether.

Let me try to explain. If we do succeed, by some convention, in eliminating the use of the atomic bomb and destroying the stock piles, I take it that we can only maintain the happy relations of the nations in peace so long as all the nations are convinced that no other nation is making more of these atomic bombs. This means that a corps of inspectors must constantly be examining in all parts of the world. We know that should any community make these bombs, or should they be about to make them, their first aggressive act must be to resist the inspection by the international inspectorate. In order, therefore, to be secure one must know that behind the inspectorate is a force which is far greater than any which is owned by the nations or group of nations which might try to oppose it. But if we do this we give to the international authority such power as would make it entirely despotic. If it were possible, therefore, to eliminate by this inspectorate the use of the atomic bomb and be assured that it could never be made, that could only be done by an international authority which must be so powerful as to be potentially despotic, unless at the same time we can contrive an international organisation responsible to the peoples of the world with the power of its despotism transferred to the people for whom it is responsible.

That means—I think one cannot evade this—that the international inspectorate can only be created as part of an effective world government. It cannot exist in any other way. If that is so, then surely we want to know the kind of world government of which it must be an effective part. And all the time this essential question is avoided. It has been evaded on all sides. Over and over again we hear—and the Russians are as bad as the others—opinions uttered from which I get the impression that neither side ever meant to make this thing work. I am convinced that everyone who

reads dispassionately the report of the Lillenthal Committee will form the opinion that it is not possible to control the atomic bomb unless one can eliminate war.

It is also quite clear—and many people realised it at the time—that we cannot make this business effective by merely tying it up with the elimination of the veto; and yet Mr. Bernard Baruch, on behalf of the United States, moved his resolution tied up with the abolition of the veto; which meant, at the time, that his resolution was never realistic. Today people are talking like schizophrenics. On the one hand, they know perfectly well that if another war takes place it must destroy victor and vanquished alike. They know in their sane moments that there is no military defence against the atomic bomb. They know furthermore that we cannot even afford to prepare for this kind of war. And yet when they get up to speak they forget these things and announce that the only way to keep safe is to keep strong.

The world is now so small and the means at our disposal for making war so dangerous that we cannot afford to have another war. The problem is what to do to avoid it. I want to put it to the House, as I have put it before, that the problem is only soluble by the creation of an effective world government which can make and enforce the laws on individuals the world over. I also will admit—and I think this is inescapable—that that cannot be done overnight. But since there is no other way, then this must be done as soon as possible, for until it is done we live in an intolerably dangerous world. History has shown that we cannot last long in this dangerous way without finally having the conflict which we know, if we have it, must destroy us all.

The problem is this: how soon can we achieve this goal? I believe it is important all the time to relate our day-to day power-political tactics to our long-term peace strategy, because we can gain support for what we mean to do in the short run only if we can show to the peoples of the world what it is we ultimately intend to achieve. I do not believe that people can be persuaded that we have to be strong in the old conventional terms since our enemies will never respect anything else but strength. Those terms do not ring true any more. If we say to our people and to people all over the world that what we must do, and do very quickly, is to achieve an entirely new world political structure—a political structure in which all the power will be concentrated behind the enforcement of law, and that we intend to get down to it as quickly as possible, then we will recruit the support of individuals for such short-term measures as are necessary.

What I criticise about the power-political attitude of this Government and of the Government of the United States, as of so many others, is their failure to realise that these two things must be constantly related in all they do and say. They must relate their short-term tactics to their long-term strategy. I do not think that that is being done. It seems to me, on the contrary, that every day it becomes easier for people to talk like the hon. Member for Kingston-upon-Thames (Mr. Boyd-Carpenter), the hon. and gallant Member for Stockport (Wing-Commander Hulbert) and the hon. and gallant Member for Petersfield (Sir G. Jeffreys). It is easy for them to talk in conventional terms about strengthening our Auxiliary Forces, increasing and improving the pay of the Armed Forces, easier to regret that some statement has been made by somebody which has made the recruiting campaign fall flat, than to admit frankly that the recruiting campaign has fallen flat because the people hate the prospect of war and they have not been told why this appalling situation is upon us or how to get out of the jam.

People the world over know full well that sooner or later mankind must find a way out of this vicious circle and they feel that the way out ought to be found now. They want to know what it is, and when they are told they are prepared to make considerable sacrifices to attain that end. I read somewhere that "In the writings and talk of men of international affairs today there is an impression of drunken men growing sober, and terribly afraid of growing sober." In their more sober moments men know that the next war is not going to be like the last one, that it is a thing which must be avoided, and that it can only be avoided by a complete and fundamental change. Yet they hate that realisation because it is difficult, so they go back drunkenly to talk in the old terms which make no sense either to themselves or to those

who listen. Although it may be stupid of some people to delude themselves, it is criminal when those people delude those whom they represent.

I believe the time has come now to say squarely and openly that we are in a war at this precise moment; because the world we live in is a world of anarchy, and that peace is a function of government. The problem is to find a way to constitute that government on a democratic and responsible basis. Sooner or later—and I think it will be soon—a world government will be achieved. I believe that in 10 years from now a world government will exist. The problem we have to decide is the form of that government. Will it come as a result of a war and be imposed on the world by the victor, or will it come as the result of the conscious, rational application of human intelligence? That is the decision we must make. To pretend that there will not be or cannot be an effective international authority simply because some country is not now playing the game, is to invite the disaster which is now so fearfully imminent.

7.52 p.m.

Commander Noble (Chelsea) The hon. Member for Acock's Green (Mr. Usborne) used, I think, the word "criminal" about the speeches that have been made on this side of the House today on the subject of defence. In our present circumstances, I should not have chosen that word myself; but I would put his speech in the criminal category so well described by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston-upon-Thames (Mr. Boyd-Carpenter). I know that the hon. Member for Acock's Green has this world organisation at heart, and nobody could wish it well more than I; but when he says that it is something that could not come for 10 years, and that it may come as a result of a war, and when he then talks about strategy and tactics as he did—well, Sir, where are we?

Mr. Usborne I did not say it could not come for 10 years. I said it would certainly come within 10 years, and that our problem is how to get it much sooner.

Commander Noble I agree. But what is going to happen in the next 10 years? What, indeed, is going to happen to this organisation if it is not respected by the countries involved? It is the first time I have heard the hon. Member apply his theory of the world organisation to the atomic bomb. As he knows, I am particularly interested in that subject. I think that his argument really was, that because one can stop one's neighbour shooting one with a gun, one does not necessarily stop him hitting you with a stick—that is true—but if one can make him civilised enough not to shoot with a gun, one may be able in the end to stop him hitting with a stick. But I am afraid I am going to disappoint the hon. Member, and turn again to the points of the moment, the points which we, on this side of the House, have expressed in the Amendment standing in my name and that of my hon. Friends, which is not, I understand, being called.

I would first endorse what has been so well said by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston-upon-Thames about the calling up and registering of the 5,000,000 men who served in the last war and also the earmarking of officers for selected posts. I myself raised this matter with regard to the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, which was raised to such enormous numbers and did such tremendous work during the last war, and I raised it, I think, on the Navy Estimates of 1946. I should like to say a further word or two about the Royal Navy, in particular with regard to the terms of our Amendment which is not to be called. I feel that out of fairness to the Admiralty I should say that the Royal Navy is, perhaps, a year ahead of the arguments which are being put up by my hon. and gallant Friends about the other two Services.

That is on the question of how many ships we have at sea; that came to a preliminary head at the beginning of this year, I think, owing to the most misguided policy of the Government in trying to hide these figures. Surely it would have been common sense to have realised that it is much more difficult to disguise how many ships we have at sea than how many tanks or aeroplanes we have; for, of course, reports from all the harbours of the world came back to say that no ships flying the White Ensign were about the world. As I have said, our discussion came to a preliminary

head, and we were told the strength of the Fleet in the Navy Estimates this year. We were told the rate of progress at which they would go to sea, and the progress that would be made with new construction.

We are very glad to know now there are many more ships at sea. The Commander-in-Chief of the Home Fleet is now visiting the West Indies with a quite sizeable force. We shall continue to press to be assured—as I think we were a week or two ago—that the process of bringing ships back to sea is being carried on, and we shall continue to press to be reassured that the programme of reconstruction is also being proceeded with, as we were told it would be. We shall also require assurances that the smaller ships, cruisers and lighter craft, which, I am sure, all Members have seen laid up in the mouths of rivers and creeks all around our coasts, are being kept in a proper state of preservation, and that they can be brought forward quickly, as we were told in the past that they could be. We shall want assurances from time to time on all these three points.

On the subject of personnel, let me echo what has been said already tonight, and of which I have spoken before, and I speak particularly of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve. We have been told on many occasions that the Royal Navy is to take only a token number of National Service men. I do hope that the Minister of Defence will be able to answer this question tonight, that my hon. Friends and I have asked time and time again: How is the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve to be built up in the future if all, or practically all, of the young men are to go to the Army or the Royal Air Force? That is a question to which we must have an answer soon. It is a problem to which we are all applying ourselves, and we do not see the answer. We are told that the Royal Navy cannot afford to take National Service men of one year's service. It seems to me that the answer is that it either has to take some more, or else that there has got to be a longer period of service. I do hope that the Minister of Defence will tell us the answer tonight. I myself have put down a Question on this subject for next week, to be answered by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Admiralty, and so if the Minister is not able to answer the question tonight, perhaps we shall get an answer then. Ever since the first figures of the allocations of National Service men to the Forces were announced we have wanted an answer to this problem.

In conclusion I should like to echo the points made so well by my hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Air-Commodore Harvey) with regard to Service conditions especially for young married officers and men. He went into many of them very carefully, including the matter of married quarters. I would also stress the question of the rents charged for these quarters, and I would stress the importance of the question of pay, which, I know, the Minister has very much at heart, and the matter of pensions, including, of course, widows' pensions. I have also put down a Question on this subject with regard to the Minister's recent statement that he was going into cases of hardship, where I think in a recent Debate he referred to disturbance allowances and the like. I have put down a Question for next Wednesday asking him if he will make a statement on that subject, and so if he cannot deal with that tonight, perhaps he will do so then.

Finally, may I refer to the paragraph in the King's Speech which was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston-upon-Thames when he said that it seemed to insinuate that all is not well with the Services. and that further steps need to be taken. May I, in that connection, remind the House of a fable, which I came across the other day, of a fox who was going through the jungle and came upon an old, wild boar, who had just killed his enemy. The wild boar was sharpening his tusks against a tree. The fox said to the boar, "Why are you doing that, when there is no enemy in sight?" The very wise old boar replied, "When the enemy is in sight, there are other things to be done."

8.2 p.m.

Mr. Fernyhough (Jarrow) I have listened to every speech except one from the Benches opposite, and the more intently I have listened, the more I am confirmed in the belief, which I have had for many years, that the party opposite is a party of war. It would appear to me that they are itching, as it were, to begin; that they have learned nothing from history. We cannot smash Communism, no matter how vile and repulsive it may be, by the atom bomb, the bullet, the

shell or the gun. It is an idea, much the same as was the idea of trade unionism in this country, and the attempt was made to crucify it by sending men abroad, putting them in prison, victimising them and terrorising them.

We have to realise that if this thing is to be overcome, it will not be overcome by the methods of war, but only by putting something better, cleaner and nobler in its place, and that will mean, of course, devoting much of the resources which we are prepared to vote to military power, to rehabilitating Europe. There is no question about that. If America today were prepared to devote to removing poverty and distress from Europe the same amount of money which she is obviously prepared to devote to going to war with Russia, there could be no question that Communism would almost automatically die a natural death. There are those who believe that the Russians conquered Europe solely because of the power of their war machine, but it has to be remembered that the Russians conquered precisely because there were in Europe, governments which neglected the problems of the common people, and social injustice was so rife that it became the normal breeding ground of Communism.

One who has been closely in touch with right hon. Members on the Front Bench opposite and on my own Front Bench and has recently written a book, "The Triple Challenge," Mr. Francis Williams, says: "Throughout Western Europe, except in Britain, where Communism has never taken root, this issue is not yet decided. In most of Eastern Europe it probably is—at any rate for the time being. And although, as a matter of actual historical fact, no Communist Government in any Eastern European country has come to power as a result of the expressed will of the majority of the people in a free election, or without the backing and support of Soviet armed forces, it may be that Communism represents the most immediately practical means of answering the revolutionary requirements of countries which—with the very great and notable exception of Czechoslovakia—have never known Western democracy and have now exchanged one kind of political oppression for another, more vigorous, more concerned to satisfy their economic needs and more ready to carry through social policies designed to remove poverty and inequality than were any of the previous regimes which ruled by much the same political methods for much narrower purposes." I suggest that if the Governments of Western Europe, the Government of America and the Government of this country want to stop the growth of Communism, they must pay more attention to the social needs of the people and less attention to the idea that, in this age, we can smash the menace of Communism by the military method. Some of us are concerned because we believe that if a re-armament programme of the size which many hon. Members opposite envisage is carried through, then, if we are not wiped out by war, we shall, because of that expenditure, be wiped out by economic poverty. It is well that we should take note of that fact. For instance, it was stated in "The Times," yesterday: "The need for economic candour touches defence closely. There can be no disguising the truth that guns and butter compete. If Ministers pretend that re-armament will not check recovery, they confess that their rearmament is unreal." I do not want to see the measures of progress which we have made in the past three years to enable our people once more to stand on their own feet and for us to become an independent nation, wiped out by virtue of great re-armament expenditure. It will mean, unquestionably, that if we go in for Armed Forces of the size which hon. Members opposite feel we ought to have in these circumstances, not only must the standard of living of our people fall lower and lower but, by virtue of the need to seek further loans from America, we shall become more and more dependent upon them and eventually reach the position in which we are virtually their 49th State.

The people of my constituency and of many other constituencies have endured poverty for 20 years, and now, at long last, under the Socialist Government, they have begun to feel, because of full employment and the social security schemes, that there is a chance of moving into a somewhat better and more secure atmosphere. I know that if we must carry out the policy envisaged in re-armament it must again force upon people in my constituency and in other constituencies the poverty and distress which was manifest between the two wars. I made the point last year, when we debated an Amendment to the King's Speech moved by hon. Members on the Benches opposite, that our nation today is faced with exactly the same choice as that which Hitler put before the German people. We can either have guns or butter, but we are not able to have both; and I submit that the response to the recruiting campaign reveals

unquestionably that, so far as the mass of people is concerned, they want to have butter. I believe that is true of the people.

Lord John Hope (Midlothian and Peebles, Northern) Will the hon. Gentleman say whether he has personally supported the recruiting campaign or not?

Mr. Fernyhough No, I have not. There is no doubt that the same choice will be made by the common people of every country. I do not believe that the ordinary people of America want war, or that the ordinary people of Russia want war, and the tragedy is that when we look round the world and know that the ordinary common people have an overwhelming desire for peace, that overwhelming desire cannot be translated into peace. It is strange, but it is true. War really means that when the big, powerful, clever men have failed they call in the people from the mean streets and the back streets to settle something they have not been able to settle. What a reflection upon the statesmen of the world that they have to say to the ordinary people, "We—those whom you are taught to look up to and respect—are not able to achieve the decisions you want. We have to call you in to do the job which you sent us to do for you."

It seems to me that in a situation such as the world faces today, where there is this growing desire for peace, it would not be a bad thing if it were possible to get all the Foreign Secretaries, all the Premiers, all the military attaches, all the diplomats—all the so-called big people—and lock them in one large room and that the common people should declare to them, "There is neither meat nor drink for you until you have settled this." I do not think there is the slightest doubt that, if they were locked up until they had settled it, they would reach agreement.

Brigadier Head (Carshalton) They would reach cannibalism.

Mr. Fernyhough No, it would be "sensible-ism." It would mean that those people who, in the main remember, are playing with other people's lives, would be facing some of the starvation which will automatically follow to most of the people if the policy of war is pursued. Let it be noted in this country, as Francis Williams, in the book to which I have already referred, says: "But among the major members of the present cast only the United States and Soviet Russia possess large enough land masses to have a chance of escaping an air and atomic attack so saturated as to leave behind it little of the organisations of government and community living and the economic resources of modern civilisation. They alone, because of the comparative immunity given to them by size, might conceivably be capable of climbing slowly back to their former status while all around them lay industrial desolation, and the dust of once great civilisations whose scattered survivors scrambled for life in such small agricultural areas of their land as could still support a primitive existence. These two are also probably the only nations in the world with the resources to start a world war." As far as I am concerned, if they are so foolish they can have it, but I hope that this Government of ours will do everything possible to keep out of that struggle. Nothing sickened me more this afternoon than to hear the plea on behalf of the Germans from the right hon. Member for Woodford (Mr. Churchill). I remember his past reference to those Nazis, those Huns, as being most of them killable and a few of them curable. There was not much sympathy for the German people then, and it is useless to pretend that these people have changed. Of course, they have not changed. Now, of course, it is the Russians. It reminded me very much of Bernard Shaw's "Man and Superman" in which he said that the British people, if there is not a principle for which to fight, will invent one.

How, in the name of goodness, can this nation of ours, which twice in a generation has poured out its blood and its treasure and has almost bankrupted itself, look upon a third catastrophe? We know it must mean the finish. There never could be within a foreseeable future any hope of economic recovery if we entered a further war which entailed half the cost of the last war for us. Because many of us on this side feel that war would bring such disaster and destruction as to make it impossible for us to survive as an independent nation or even as a people, we say that no effort should be spared to try to settle the differences between the Powers in a sensible and a Christian manner. However, we say also that they cannot be settled by force, because it is true that those who use the sword will inevitably perish by the sword.

The right hon. Member for Woodford was outspoken in his tribute to Northern Ireland and his determination to see that those people must not under any circumstances be handed over to Southern Ireland. I do not want to take part in that dispute between the two sections of the Irish people but, having paid a recent visit to Northern Ireland, I would say that it did not strike me as being that great, free, independent democracy which I anticipated.

We were told, and I believe it, that democracy is dying and is almost dead in Eastern Europe. After my experience in Northern Ireland I felt that democracy was either dying or almost dead there, because we held a meeting under the auspices of the Northern Ireland Labour Party, of which we informed the police. Prior to the meeting the "Lambeg" drummers came out and it was impossible for us to make ourselves heard. They were allowed to parade the streets and to come within two feet of the platform from which I was speaking. If it had not been that I was in a country for which I felt respect, I might have provoked that crowd, but I asked some hundreds of our people to be sensible and calm and not to smash up those drummers. Although I went to the police prior to the meeting and during the meeting, they were quite helpless in the matter. It seems to me that if hooligans of that type can make it impossible to conduct a well-ordered, advertised meeting—at which incidentally there was a detective present, as there was at every one I attended—Northern Ireland wants to look up or, as far as democracy is concerned, she will have followed some of those Eastern countries about which hon. Members opposite are so often upset.

Whatever may be the feelings of hon. Members opposite with regard to the nationalisation of steel, I welcome that Measure if only because I believe history proves that those in whose hands the present power resides have proved themselves unfit to use it. The Iron and Steel Federation of this country prevented Jarrow, at a time of great distress when men's hearts were breaking for work, from having a steel works erected there, and in my opinion it justifies us, when we get power, in taking the power from them. My final word to Members of the Government on the Front Bench is: See it through, as you will, but when you have seen it through, in the name of decency do not find any appointments for any of those people who thought they would sabotage the Steel Bill by resigning from the Iron and Steel Board.

8.19 p.m.

Brigadier Medlicott (Norfolk, Eastern) I do not propose to follow in any detail the line taken by the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Fernyhough), but I must make one emphatic protest against a remark he made at the beginning of his speech when he thought fit to accuse hon. Members on this side of the House of wanting war. In these matters facts speak louder than words and if the hon. Member cares to investigate for himself the proportions in which Members of this House died fighting in the late war, he will find that those on this side at least have no personal reasons for wanting another war to break out.

At an earlier stage in the Debate a speech was made by the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Bing), whom I am glad to see in his place. The point of chief interest about his -speeches is always whether the one to which we are listening today can be possibly more mischievous to the public interest than the one which he made last time. He sets himself a very high target in this respect but I think we can say with confidence that he always achieves it.

I am always filled with some astonishment at the ease with which hon. Members opposite find it possible to dismiss as of no account the speeches made by the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition. I should have thought that, at this particular moment, the Foreign Secretary wants, above all things, to feel that the Leader of the Opposition is at least prepared to support him if he is taking a firm line. There would be great ground for complaint by hon. Members opposite if the Leader of the Opposition were going around suggesting conciliation and appeasement. The Foreign Secretary would have every right to say that the Opposition were making his position more difficult; but in fact, although there may be varying views of the precise details of what the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition proposes, the broad fact is that what he has said inevitably must have strengthened the hands of the Foreign Secretary in the great task with which he is faced.

Many of the speeches made on this matter by hon. Members opposite seem to be made in the wrong context. They seem to assume that the present negotiations in Paris are all being conducted between diplomats of the old school and that the great thing is to avoid saying anything which might wound the delicate susceptibilities of Mr. Vishinsky. It is entirely false to make that assumption and that is why I, for one, welcome enormously what the Leader of the Opposition has said. It has been well said that the only lesson we learn from history is that we do not learn from history. Fortunately, however, in this generation we have had one man who has been able to learn from history and because of what he has said in the past this House still stands and we are able to debate here today.

This stage of the Debate has been earmarked primarily for matters of defence. I must admit that, not at first realising this, my own remarks were intended to be directed mainly at points which, at first sight, are not matters of defence; but, on reflection, what I want to say in the few minutes at my disposal seems to have a direct bearing upon this very matter. I think it was Napoleon who said something to the effect that in warfare the moral is to the material as three to one, or in some other high proportion; so it may not be out of place if I say a word or two about the moral—or morale—side of warfare. After all, there was the Department of Psychological Warfare and it was felt that it played its part in the achieving of victory.

Perhaps, however, I may digress for a moment. I was listening to the speech of the hon. and gallant Member for Peters-field (Sir G. Jeffreys) with, if not approval, at least with comparative equanimity when he was proposing the abolition of various branches of the Service, but when he got to the particular branch in which I happened to serve, his arguments did not carry me along with him so convincingly. Not having a vested interest in either the Education Corps or the Corps of Military Police, I can speak quite freely about them, and I cannot agree with the distinguished soldier in proposing that they should be reduced. The Education Corps is something which, on its present scale, has come to stay. There are long hours, especially in the winter months, when the work of the Army education staff is of immense importance to the men, and, above all, when we are taking young men away from their education at a vital time in their lives, we have a special duty, whilst they are in the Services, to make it up to them. Of the Corps of Military Police it must not be thought that their duties are entirely disciplinary. I do not think the military police have ever had the recognition due to them for their immense work during the late war in the control of traffic. The movement of forces in North Africa, and especially in Normandy, was vital to the success of the operation and those men suffered immense casualties in the way they stood their ground under most dangerous and difficult conditions.

One phrase in the Gracious Speech in which I was particularly interested was the reference to the need for continued exertions and self-restraint. This is a most laudable aim, but it seems to come with rather ill grace from a Government which certainly has not shown very much restraint in its own activities. Then, the Gracious Speech referred to the need in international affairs for mutual confidence and goodwill. I wonder what the Government have done to foster these admirable qualities at home? No amount of eloquent talk can conceal the fact that at the last Election as many people voted against Socialism as voted for it, with the result that Bill after Bill which is being forced through this House is being forced through against the opinions and views of nearly half the people in this country. If these were normal times such tactics would be perfectly legitimate, but we are living in dangerous and sinister times, and the Government are utterly failing to show that goodwill and self-restraint which they call for from others.

I have referred to the need for self-restraint in the Government. It must be difficult, of course, for the Government to show self-restraint when so little is shown by some of the individual Ministers. This Government are obsessed with the view that legislation is all important, almost miraculous in its effects; but something which is more important than legislation is the bearing of the people, their attitude towards the legislation and their outlook and morale generally.

The question I want to ask is—What is being done by the Prime Minister and his colleague the Minister of Defence to stop some of the Ministers from making, time and time again, speeches which are dividing this nation into two parts? It is being said by experienced politicians that never within living memory has there been so much bitterness in

politics as there is today, just when we need unity above all else. A great deal of the blame must rest upon Ministers opposite. We have the example of a Minister who, in order to illustrate an educational point, referred to the children of Conservatives as "Tory brats." Very fresh in our minds is the "tinker's cuss" speech which, again, sought to divide the country into the organised workers, on the one hand, and the rest, on the other. Then there was the speech of the Minister of Health upon the celebrated "vermin" theme.

These wounds go very deep and at a time when it is necessary to build up unity and a common purpose, it is highly unfortunate that Ministers, especially the Minister of Health, who should be a Minister of healing and not of wounding, should give vent to these reckless statements. There is a story told of a member of a famous London orchestra who, when he got home one night, was asked by his wife who had conducted the concert that night. He said, "I am terribly sorry, I don't know. I forgot to look." That is the kind of situation which one feels exists in the Cabinet orchestra today. A great deal of good could be done if the Prime Minister would exercise a little more authority over his outspoken and reckless colleagues.

I welcome one item in the Gracious Speech which particularly affects the constituency I represent. This, again, is a matter not unconnected with defence, although it is defence against a different enemy. It is the proposal to introduce legislation to protect the coast from erosion. Many constituencies are affected, Norfolk and Suffolk perhaps most of all. We must not be too jubilant and believe that this problem has been settled merely by the decision to pass an Act of Parliament. The cost of any effective scheme is going to run into tens of millions of pounds. I regret that steps have not been taken to set up a standing body of experts, as recommended by a Royal Commission 37 years ago, to go into the real causes of erosion. I fear that this legislation, like so much other legislation which has been passed, will not bear fruit for a long time to come, because the ground has not been properly prepared. Nevertheless, it is a step in the right direction and we welcome it warmly.

Another point I wish to make is, unhappily, very much more controversial, although it ought not to be. I refer to the fact that there is no mention in the Gracious Speech which holds out any hope that disability pensions payable to disabled ex-Service men will be increased. These matters do have their bearing on the recruiting campaign and, if for that reason alone, they are worthy of mention in this Debate today. As far as one can gather from speeches of hon. Members opposite, in the country, and statements in the Press today, the Government appear already to have decided not to accede to the request for a select Committee to be set up. I must say something which I do not like having to say. I cannot help feeling that the Government would view this matter more sympathetically if a higher proportion of the Members of the Government had been in closer contact with the men who fought and suffered the disabilities of which we now complain.

Mr. George Wigg (Dudley). The hon. and gallant Member was a Member of this House when, in 1939, the Conservative Party reduced the disability pensions from 40s. to 32s. 6d. per week. Did he protest then?

Brigadier Medlicott With all due respect, I do not think it is helping the cause of the ex-Service men to dig back into history of that kind. I make no attempt to defend it—no attempt whatever. I am perfectly prepared to accept those figures as correct and I would not for a moment attempt to defend them, but, I repeat, there is a feeling among ex-Service men that they do not get the sympathy from the Government that they would get if more Members of the Government had had closer experience of the kind of thing which has brought about the disablement with which we are here concerned.

Mr. Wigg The hon. and gallant Member knows perfectly well that that suggestion is completely and utterly unworthy. The present Government have done more for the ex-Service man than any Government in this country's history.

Brigadier Medlicott That may be a good point for the hon. Member for Dudley (Mr. Wigg) to make, but it still does not affect me. I am not pretending to have been a fighting soldier, I have no claims in that respect. Because of that, I

feel a special responsibility to do all I can to see that these men who have suffered so disproportionately should at least have justice. We are not even asking that the figures should be increased at the moment, but simply that there should be an impartial examination into the merits of the case. If hon. Members opposite are not prepared to concede that, it seems to me that their sense of justice is extraordinarily lacking.

Mr. Bing Does not the hon. and gallant Member realise that in 1935 the in-treatment rate was fixed at 35s. 4d. It is now 101s.? How could he be a party to fixing it at that rate, and now criticise this side of the House for not having it increased?

Brigadier Medlicott We are now dealing with the situation as it is today and we are also trying to do what hon. Members opposite are so happy to talk about, that is, to face the future. If the cost of living goes on increasing, the position of these disabled men will be even more difficult. Before the war, hon. Members opposite made great capital out of the inequities of the means test. The means test was talked about up and down the country and undoubtedly that campaign resulted in a vast amount of support being given to hon. Members opposite. What is now proposed by those who are resisting our efforts on behalf of ex-Service men is that these men should be given a basic amount and, if their particular circumstances require it, that they should then be helped by various means. What is that other than the means test all over again? I personally make the strongest protest against the refusal of the Government to set up a Select Committee to examine this matter.

Mr. Bing I am sure that the hon. and gallant Member does not want to mislead the House. The allowances are paid as a matter of right. There is no question of a means test; they are paid as a matter of right. Allowances in regard to children and constant attention, and so on, are fixed in accordance with a scale.

Brigadier Medlicott The basic figures are fixed, but the defence which supporters of the Government have been making is that there is no need for an increase because the various supplementations are adequate. We resist that argument utterly and say that it is regrettable that there should have to be this campaign in respect of a matter for which I should have thought there was an overwhelming case.

Finally, I want to say that there is great difficulty in some parts of the country in understanding the underlying reason why the nationalisation of the steel industry is being introduced now. It is obvious that the steel industry when it is nationalised will not be more efficient than the industry is today. Many of us feel it is unforgivable in a time of crisis that a vast industry which would have to play such a vital part in war, if, unhappily, war should come, should be cast into all the difficulties of a great transition at this particular moment.

My view is that in this respect the Government are guided largely by considerations as to what is the value to them politically of nationalising an industry. They feel that nationalised employees are more likely to vote Socialist than in any other direction. Rightly or wrongly, they feel that. They feel that by nationalising the maximum number of industries, and thus bringing more and more people under the direction of the State, their own term of office is likely to be made more permanent. In my view that is the real explanation which underlies many of the steps taken by this present Government, steps for which there is no justification in terms of logic or merit or the needs of the nation.

8.41 p.m.

Mr. Rankin (Glasgow, Tradeston) I was interested in the remarks of the hon. and gallant Member for East Norfolk (Brigadier Medlicott) because I gathered from the hon. Member for Kingston-upon-Thames (Mr. Boyd-Carpenter) that this Debate was more or less exclusively confined to purposes of defence. I think that he took two of my hon. Friends to task, if I understood him aright, for not dealing closely with the defences of the country.

Mr. Boyd-Carpenter The hon. Member pays me too high a compliment. The indication that in the Debate priority should be given to defence came from the Chair.

Mr. Rankin I accept that and I am sure that the hon. Member will realise that no compliment that I could pay would be too great for him. But I did gather that that was his attitude. However, I welcome the line which the hon. and gallant Member for East Norfolk has taken because to some extent it is a lifeline to me. The course which I had intended taking had already been followed so closely and so well by my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Bing) and my hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Dulwich (Major Vernon) that I felt that most of my thunder had been stolen. Therefore I thank the hon. and gallant Member for East Norfolk for rescuing me to some extent.

I was interested in his remarks regarding nationalisation. He may not have observed within the past few weeks that nationalised schemes are becoming popular with the investing public. He referred to steel. Steel, within the past few weeks went to the money market and asked for three or four million pounds. They did not reach that small target. But hydro-electricity, a nationalised concern, came to the investing public and asked for £100 million. Within a few days that sum was oversubscribed, which does not seem to indicate that nationalisation schemes are such a fearful thing as the Opposition endeavour to picture.

I was also astonished to learn that this Parliament, the first I have been in, has shown a bitterness never before shown in the political annals of this country. In the three and a half years I have been here I have never yet seen that bitterness descend to hon. Members heaving HANSARDS at one another across the Floor of the House. That, I believe, was an old Tory practice which we have entirely discarded.

Brigadier Medlicott I intended to say that the bitterness was in the country, and not necessarily in this Parliament. If I did not make myself clear I am Sorry.

Mr. Rankin Even if the hon. and gallant Member proposes to shift his ground—and I accept it—I can follow him. Every single by-election has shown that there is still that support in the country for the Government, without bitterness, that existed in 1945. The hon. and gallant Member quoted Shaw to the effect that history teaches us that history teaches us nothing. When my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley (Mr. Wigg) put a question to him with regard to pensions he showed that he had learned that lesson very well indeed. We on this side of the House welcome his statement that the Opposition did not want war. We would have received it with greater acclaim had he been able to explain why, if they did not want war the leader of the Opposition at the Tory Party Conference said that it is time we were bringing matters to a head so far as Russia is concerned and that freedom so far as we are concerned depends on the atom bomb.

If it is time we were bringing matters to a head, and if freedom depends on the atom bomb, how are we going to bring matters to a head, by reason or by force? He has not indicated. But I am certain that everyone who followed the proceedings at the Tory Party Conference could come to one conclusion and one conclusion only, namely that when the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Woodford (Mr. Churchill) made that statement he meant to bring matters to a head by force, and if he meant that freedom depends on the atom bomb then he meant by implication that if freedom does depend on the atom bomb, we must go to war immediately with Russia.

Why do I say that? I was one of a small party representative of all sides of this House who visited the Research Station at Harwell in the early part of this summer. That was the first time that there had been any outsiders allowed in there. Naturally there was one question put to Sir John Cockcroft and his assistants. It was put by me. I think it would be put by every hon. Member who was there. That question was, "Has Russia got the secret of the atom bomb?" I do not know how many hon. Members are here now who were at Harwell on that date. But I think they will agree that that question was put by every Member. The answer of the scientists was quite clear, "Yes, she has." They had no doubt of that fact. The next question, the consequential one was, "Is she able to produce the atom bomb?" The answer there

was not a qualified rejection but a doubt, a feeling that she might or might not be able to produce it. The question was asked, "Would she be able to produce it in the near future?" Again the attitude of the men who are advising us today was that they did not think that Russia would fail to achieve the industrial production of the atom bomb.

If that is the case, if it is realised that having the secret she will, within a measurable space of time, proceed to the industrial production of the bomb, then, if freedom hangs on the possession of the atomic bomb and if we are to preserve that freedom, we must use the bomb now. Therefore, I submit that while we should like to believe all that the hon. and gallant Gentleman has said about the Opposition not desiring war, that desire does not fit in with the actual statements which have been made.

I want to emphasise the points which have been raised by two of my hon. Friends on this side of the House. One point has not been sufficiently emphasised. While we have Armed Forces, it follows that we are entitled to say to the Government, "What do you propose to do with these Armed Forces? Are you going to keep them exclusively for the defence of this country or are you going to align your policy with some other country or groups of countries and employ your Armed Forces in that way? If you are, what is the policy that will be pursued in the use of those Armed Forces as a help to some other nation? "My two hon. Friends have covered that aspect of the question pretty fully. I wish to emphasise one point which they have omitted.

It is clear in the American mind that the whole secret of success in the event of war depends on the specialised bombing forces destroying the nerve centres of Russia. If that fails, then America realises that we are in for what she calls a continental war which will produce such misery and chaos as will enable the Communism which we set out to destroy by force, to flourish and expand more vigorously than it otherwise would. We are not entitled to assume that the specialised bombing force will succeed. Professor Blackett tells us now that the absolute weapon is not necessarily an absolute weapon. Therefore, we face the horror of a continental war. There are some of us who ask, "Is there no other alternative? "

I suggest that there are three alternatives which can be presented. There is the alternative of armed neutrality in which we would have adequate defences but would say that these defences are for the protection of our own country. If we have any leadership in Western Europe, then we can bring Western Europe with us and thus enlarge the group which is prepared to follow this policy of armed neutrality. If we can bring in the Commonwealth all the better; we shall have made our circle wider still. If we can secure support from Western Europe and our own Commonwealth then we have taken a great step in creating the only secure and lasting way of maintaining peace in this world, and that is by the formation of a world government.

8.56 p.m.

Mr. Baker White (Canterbury) I have only a few minutes at my disposal and I hope that the hon. Member for Trades-tion (Mr. Rankin) will forgive me if I do not follow him in his argument. I wish to mention an aspect of defence which so far has not been discussed at all. I refer to the need for defence measures against political warfare. The Gracious Speech speaks of defence measures, but there is no reference to defence against "cold" war. We must face the facts that at the moment we have no defensive machinery similar to the Political Warfare Executive which we had in this country during the war. Hon. and right hon. Gentlemen on both sides have mentioned the situation in Berlin. The Gracious Speech also refers to that subject. That is only part of the picture. Democracy, the form of democracy for which our forefathers fought and died, is under political attack. There is a belief that is quite widely held that we have only to settle the Berlin blockade and all will be well. That is a most dangerous view, a perilous illusion. The situation in Berlin is but one part of a world campaign against stability and ordered progress. We should consider what we must do to defend ourselves against that form of "cold" warfare.

Some hon. Members opposite have the idea that we are too hostile in our attitude to Russia. That view was particularly noticeable in the sincere speech made by the hon. Member for Central Cardiff (Mr. G. Thomas) yesterday. The hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Bing), I think, referred to the Soviet Union as "a friendly nation," and the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Fernyhough) thought that Communism might easily, in certain circumstances, die a natural death. I think that these hon. Members make a fundamental error in thinking that the Russian people and the Soviet Government are one and the same thing. Russia is not ruled by the representatives of the people. She is not even ruled by the Congress of Soviets, but by the Politbureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which also controls the Cominform and the political warfare of Communism all over the world. The hon. Member for Central Cardiff (Mr. G. Thomas) referred to "wicked propaganda which cannot be substantiated." I shall support my assertions entirely from Communist documents, not old ones, but those issued within the past six weeks. In Communist States it is the Communist Party which controls everything. This declaration was made a few weeks ago by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union: "The party is the highest political organisation of the working class, which stands over and above all other political organisations and State Departments, including the Soviets in the Soviet Union." That, I think, is clear enough, and I commend it to hon. Members opposite who believe that we can do a deal with the Russian people as distinct from the Russian Government. The Statutes of the Communist International re-affirmed in 1932 war on democracy, advocating, in its own words "the violent overthrow" of non-Communist Governments and "the destruction of the State apparatus."

The Communist International was wound up; the Cominform replaces it. The former members of the Executive Committee of the Communist International who are not dead are now distributed in strategic positions throughout Europe. Rakosi is the dictator in Hungary, Anna Pauker dictator of Roumania; Pieck is in Germany, Thorez in France, Torgler in Italy; Dimitrov is dictator of Bulgaria and Gottwald dictator of Czechoslovakia. That is where the Executive committee of the Communist International are. In the past month the Executive Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union has reaffirmed its war on democracy in these words: "Communist parties can live and develop only in open warfare against the enemies of Communism." I think we may just as well recognise that the great majority of hon. Members of this House are regarded as the enemies of Communism. That is a declaration of what the hon. Member for Hornchurch calls a "friendly nation." This document went on to declare that the theory that there could be

"peaceful development of Capitalist elements alongside Socialism is a rotten and opportunist theory." In this case, one should read the word "Communism" for "Socialism." It has also stated that the Communist parties of Italy and France have not overthrown their existing Governments—and I quote again the actual words—

"because, unfortunately, the Soviet armies could not give the French and Italian Communist parties assistance." This is the "friendly nation," and this is not what the hon. Member for Central Cardiff called "wicked propaganda," but a document issued by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union—a quotation from the fountain head of Communism. It is sufficient to justify the argument that, as part of the reconstitution of our defences, we should include a Political Warfare Department.

Another thing to be remembered is the crawling subservience of all Communist parties to the Cominform. Faced with this situation and the "cold" war, I welcome the passages in the Gracious Speech which promise the strengthening of our defences, and I hope that early attention will be given to this problem of defence against political warfare. I give full support to the suggestion of my hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Central Glasgow (Colonel Hutchison) yesterday, when he said that the Cominform should be answered by a "Truthinform." The lesson of history is this. When Britain and those nations associated with her are strong, peace becomes more certain. The Royal Navy is still the watchdog of liberty, and sea power is as vital today as it was in Nelson's days. I will conclude by reading an extract from a speech that may be familiar to some hon. Members: "When the world shall see that you will not suffer the British Crown and nation to be menaced and insulted, those who most envy the present happiness, and tranquillity

of this kingdom, and who are endeavouring to make us subservient to their ambition, will consider their own interest and circumstances before they make any attempt on so brave a people, strengthened and supported by prudent and powerful alliances; and, though desirous to preserve the peace, able and ready to defend themselves against the efforts of all aggressors. Such resolutions and such measures, timely taken, I am satisfied are the most effectual means of preventing a war and continuing to us the blessings of peace and prosperity." I wish those words had been contained in the Gracious Speech, because that is Britain speaking with the voice of the lion, and they are so very true of today. But they come from an earlier Gracious Speech—that drafted by Robert Walpole and delivered on the 20th January, 1726.

9.5 p.m.

Brigadier Head (Carshalton) I do not propose—and, indeed, I think it would be wrong and taking advantage of the House if I were to do so—to repeat the remarks and suggestions which have been made by hon. Members on this side of the House concerning the steps which we believe should be urgently taken to improve the state of our Defence Forces. These remarks were very forcefully and cogently put by my right hon. Friend the Member for Warwick and Leamington (Mr. Eden) in a Debate which we had on this subject only a month ago. It would be redundant to repeat them, but I think I am reflecting the opinion of most hon. Members on this side of the House, and of quite a few on the other side, when I say that there is no sign in the King's Speech that the urgency of this problem has been appreciated by the Government Front Bench.

Before I recapitulate the reasons why certain hon. Members from the back benches on this side put down an Amendment which you, Mr. Deputy-Speaker, did not see fit to call, I will comment briefly on one or two of the speeches made in this Debate. On many occasions previously I have made harsh criticisms of the policy and action of the Minister of Defence, but I must say in all honesty that when I heard the speeches which came from behind him today, my general feeling was one of increased sympathy with the right hon. Gentleman. It seems to me that the remarks made by many back bench Members opposite showed that, as far as foreign affairs and defence were concerned, they have not even learned what one might term the "facts of life."

I will turn, first, to the speech of the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Bing). I listened closely to his remarks, and it seemed to me that if they were widely read in his constituency, and if he were unfortunate enough to walk out of this House and be run over by a 'bus, there would be a by-election very favourable to this side. The only way in which I can interpret his remarks is that it is futile to arm or to protect one's country. In the event of war we should be obliterated, and, therefore, we should hoist the white or, preferably, the red flag. As the hon. Member went to some lengths to state how we should all be obliterated by bacilli, atom bombs, and so forth, I would like to reply to him, because it seemed to me that his speech was really a mixture of Professor Blackett, the "Daily Worker," and Uriah Heep.

For what it is worth, I would like to give him my appreciation of the situation for comparison with his own appreciation. In fact, I will bet him quite a lot of money, £5 if he wishes, and if that is not out of Order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there will be very little publicity for my remarks in the "Daily Worker." My appreciation of the situation is that, at the present time, the horrors which he adumbrates for this country are imaginary. At the present time, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Woodford (Mr. Churchill) has said, it so happens that, strategically, we are in a position of considerable strength, and I will tell him why. It is generally known that we have an immense lead in atomic warfare, and it is generally recognised and accepted that the Soviet Union lag far behind and have no weapons which work at all. All these references to horrors by the hon. Gentleman are very wrong, and very damaging to our position. In my opinion, the most vulnerable country in the world today, if there were a war, would be Soviet Russia. They have an immense concentration of communications, road and railway line in Moscow, and administratively also they have an immense concentration of motive power, both for industry and the prosecution of war, in the oilfields of

Baku, but no bomb which is worth while. In these circumstances, any body of military experts making an appreciation of the situation strategically would be extremely ill-advised to risk a real chance of war.

Mr. Bing I do not wish to argue with the hon. and gallant Gentleman, but I think we should get the facts right. The point I was making was that absolute weapons are divided into two classes—the atomic bomb and the bacterial weapon. Anyone can make a bacterial weapon if he has an ordinary brewery or a laboratory.

Brigadier Head The hon. Gentleman talks glibly about bacterial weapons, but I can assure him that they are extraordinarily ineffective as they exist at present. They are not as good as people say. They are the bogey weapon. The weapon which is important at the present time is this bomb, whatever the hon.

Gentleman may say. I merely say that whereas his inference is that we are weak and we had better look out, at the present time, with this bomb, we are extremely strong. I say that merely to counteract the hon. Gentleman's bogey tales which rather remind me of childhood days when one's nanny used to say that the bogey-man might come down the chimney. I think he is pitching it very high, and what he says serves no good purpose in the cause of the British Commonwealth.

I turn to the speech of the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Fernyhough). I see he is not in his place, but I hope he will excuse me if in his absence I make one or two slightly discourteous remarks about his speech. He accused us of being the party of war. It is my own opinion—and I say this against my own side of the House—that if there is an accusation which can be made against the Tory Party it is perhaps that in the past they have been too much the party of peace—very much more so than hon. Members opposite. I am absolutely convinced that if one is to hold an inquiry into why all these wars started, the reason is undue disarmament, undue concentration on everything going into social services and the obvious vote-catching things, and a neglect of armaments. That is the easiest and commonest cause of war. That is the eternal temptation to the politician and the eternal problem of democracy. We are called the party of war because we are stating a truism which is extremely unpopular, and there is not a vote in what we are saying on this subject. To call us the party of war is not only unfair, but is ignorant and probably dangerous.

The hon. Member for Jarrow also criticised my right hon. Friend the Member for Woodford for what he said about the German generals and his sympathies with their predicament at the present time. He said that in the past it was a very different story and that my right hon. Friend had constantly said "Let us kill all Germans" and so forth. Whether the German generals were guilty or not and whatever their crimes may be, there cannot be anyone in this House who does not feel that the retention in very squalid circumstances of these men for three years without a statement of the crime for which they are going to be tried, is a blot on the British methods of justice. I do not think it is fair to accuse my right hon. Friend who, when he was fighting the war against the Germans, put everything he had into it, of being inconsistent because of his indignation at a very sorry blot on the method with which we have conducted justice in this regard.

I would like particularly to support the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston-upon-Thames (Mr. Boyd-Carpenter) regarding foreign nationals who are living in this country and who have not been used in any way in strengthening our defences. My hon. Friend specified the numbers of these men who are unemployed. With our acute manpower problems, it seems not only pig-headed but extremely wasteful to make no use of these men. I am ignorant of the reasons for this, and I cannot for the life of me think of any good reason for resisting this very sensible and economical suggestion. It is a little inconsistent when one considers the policy of the party opposite in these matters and remembers, as I very vividly do, at a particularly critical period of the war, the most loud-mouthed remarks of the Minister of Health regarding the senior ranks of the Polish Army.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston-upon-Thames also asked a question which I should like to underline. He asked about our anti-aircraft defences. They are to be manned by Territorials, but he asked whether the Territorials

were in such a position as to be ready to fulfil their duty in the event of a sudden outbreak of war. The reason I wish to underline that question is that this is the ninth time it has been asked in this House without being answered. Perhaps the ninth time will be lucky, and I am hoping so, though I must confess I have my doubts.

It is high time the country had an answer to this question, because if the present international tension gets worse, perhaps the most important single matter as it deteriorates, will be this question of the immediate manning of the antiaircraft defences. My interpretation of no answer having been given to the previous eight questions is not that we must have wonderfully efficient and frightfully secret anti-aircraft defences—I do not think security is at the bottom of it—but that no action has been taken to make the scheme ready. Let us have an answer from the Minister of Defence now that the question is being put for the ninth and, I hope, for the last time.

My hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Chelsea (Commander Noble) stated—and it was one of the most favourable remarks in the Debate—that the Royal Navy were ahead of the other two Services in their existing arrangements. I believe that that is true and it is important to realise why that is true. I suggest that the reason the Navy have got on with the job and are really comparatively well organised is that they are independent of the decisions regarding National Service. The point is that the Navy have been able to do what they were very fond of doing during the war and which is known as U.N.A., which stands for Unilateral Navy Action. They were able to do so, because to a large extent they were outside the National Service scheme. Then there is U.P.A., which stands for Unilateral Pongo Action, and which relates to the Army and also to the Air Force. These two Forces are slowing up through lack of decision regarding the future of National Service.

My hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Stockport (Wing-Commander Hulbert) made some remarks regarding Territorial recruiting. On frequent occasions I have spoken on behalf of Territorial recruiting—and I have in my way done my best to support this particular issue. I think it is only fair and right to say in this House—I am sorry that the Secretary of State for War is not here—that the Secretary of State for War suffers from the weakness of having a very low boiling point. He has boiled over in this House and made some of the most regrettable and damaging remarks he could have made.

I have made many speeches and done my best for the Secretary of State for War. I have gone so far as to say that whatever he did in the Ministry of Fuel and Power, I believe he intended to do his best in the War Office. It is only right to add that sometimes from the back of the hall people called out "Red," thinking I was a fellow traveller with the Secretary of State for War. However, it is only right to say that when cross-questioned about a particular speech of the right hon. Gentleman, I have said and I say again now, that for that speech accusing us on this side of the House of looking for war the Secretary of State for War ought to be hanged, drawn, stuffed and placed in the Library to show how low a Minister can sink when he loses his temper.

What, then, is the position today regarding the Armed Forces? The reason I and many of my hon. Friends on this side of the House put down the Amendment, which is not being called, is that today we are depending on a conscript force. We are pretty sure that the present system of National Service does not work. We are pretty sure that the present system of National Service has a wastage and that there is a surplus which the Minister of Defence is deferring year after year. We are absolutely certain, whether it works, whether it is wasteful, whatever its defects, that there is one thing that is a paramount necessity at the moment, and that is a decision. Is the right hon. Gentleman going to alter it or is he not? By 14th December he will have to make up his mind. What is paralysing, what would paralyse anybody who has to make a plan, is not to know what the right hon. Gentleman's decision is to be. We had a most categorical statement from the Foreign Secretary that the whole of this matter was being considered as a matter of extreme urgency. That was in July. Now we are in October, still awaiting a decision.

It does not affect hon. Members opposite very much, but let me ask hon. Members this question. Suppose they had to work out plans resulting from continued deferment; suppose they had to work out plans resulting from the reservation

of certain occupations; suppose they had to work out mobilisation plans not knowing whom they could call back and whom they could not; suppose they had to work out trooping movements over the next year and cater for the success of what I believe is now called the "through put" of all the men called up; suppose they were asked to work all that out, and they had to wait because there was no decision about National Service: how would they get on with their plans? At the present time any scheme or plan for the increased proficiency of our Armed Forces is stalling and is stultified because there is lack of decision by the Government regarding National Service. What I say is that that decision is very much overdue.

The King's Speech and the Prime Minister's speech give nothing but further cause for alarm. The Prime Minister said the day before yesterday: "The measures which have been taken to strengthen our Regular and Reserve Forces and re-equip them have already been announced and I shall not recapitulate." That announcement, to which I listened with very great care, was really, by and large, a statement that the right hon. Gentleman would look into the whole matter of making attractions to stimulate voluntary recruiting, of putting up pay and that he would look into the whole question of National Service. Yet the Prime Minister talked about what had already been announced and said he would not recapitulate. That is a little disappointing. A moment or two later he said: "We are carefully reviewing the whole of the question of National Service as to how best to make use of the manpower of the nation to build up our Services."—[OFFICIAL REPORT, 26th October, 1948; Vol. 457, c. 29.]" It seemed to me to be an absolute assumption that if we had National Service we were going to try to make the best use of the men called up. But it is only now, at this late stage, that that is to be examined; that examination only now is to take place. That is not so much an indication that the question of National Service is being examined, as a governmental hiccup showing that they feel, "We have been waiting somewhat, and we ought to do something about it." That is the reason my hon. Friends and I have put down our Amendment.

A very much greater man on defence questions than the right hon. Gentleman—Napoleon—always said throughout his life that there was one factor which was absolutely precious, and that was time. That is the one thing of which, it seems to me, the right hon. Gentleman is peculiarly spendthrift. We have now been dodging along on a sort of ad hoc policy for a very long time indeed, and it is time we had a decision. I know the difficulties the right hon. Gentleman has. I have heard of some of them tonight. I once said in a previous speech—and I wondered afterwards if it was fair—that if the right hon. Gentleman wanted a badge for himself, he should have as his badge a buck passant and the motto "Ad hoc." I am inclined to amend that suggestion, and suggest that he should have for his badge a rabbit regardant and the motto "Mind your back." because he is under some very considerable difficulty. But it is not the job of the Government to look behind them at their back benchers, or to wonder how many votes they are going to get by instituting the best policy. There is not a single vote in the action demanded of the right hon. Gentleman the Minister of Defence, but there is something more precious than votes, and I will tell him what it is—it is lives.

9.26 p.m.

The Minister of Defence (Mr. A. V. Alexander) In the course of the Debate today, we have covered a great deal of ground on questions of detail, upon which I shall endeavour to answer certain points later, and we have also had a good many general statements. In the first place, I think that I ought to say a word or two in reply to the right hon. Member for Woodford (Mr. Churchill), who, I am glad to see, has just re-entered the Chamber. I will say nothing about his speech, except the short passage on defence, in the course of which, I think, he made the somewhat uncomplimentary reference to myself that I was no longer to be so much trusted since our decision to reduce to 12 months the period of National Service. He saw that it might be desirable, in certain circumstances, to have a Debate in Secret Session in order that more information might be placed before the House. That is a question which would have to be referred to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, but, from my point of view, at any time the state of the country requires it, and we have to debate questions of defence, I personally can see no objection to having such a Secret Session so that we may be perfectly frank on some of the main issues.

With regard to the general state that we are in today, and with reference to the speech which the right hon. Member for Woodford made at Llandudno, I must say, as I said at the time and I say again now, that there were some parts of it so important that I took it away and studied it with great care, particularly with regard to what he said on military strategy and defence matters, which the right hon. Gentleman has referred to again today. It seems to me that he had one eye on the atom bomb and the other eye on Russia, and that he was not much concerned, at any rate in that particular speech, with what is one of the great necessities of the present time, which is that we should try to save the soul of Central Europe and strive to secure the spiritual and economic revival of that part of Europe. In this way alone can we really hope to arrest the insidious and incipient progress of the menace of Communism as it is spreading today, and to which reference has been made so frequently in the Debate this afternoon.

The other thing which I would like to say about the remarks of the right hon. Gentleman on that occasion at Llandudno is that I was not quite sure, especially in view of his reinforcement of the matter this afternoon, what sort of maximum strength he seems to think we ought to keep our Forces at today. I looked up passages, after I had studied his Llandudno speech, in a number of other speeches on the matter which the right hon. Gentleman had made, and I found that he asked at the beginning of the postwar period for a much more rapid rundown of the Forces than we are now making.

Mr. Churchill At a much higher level than we have now reached.

Mr. Alexander I am coming to that but, if I remember rightly, his final figure, the last one I have seen—and he will correct me if I am wrong—was that we should come down to about one and a half million men in the Services. I suggest that, if that is the position of the right hon. Gentleman, and if he sticks to that, in the light of what we have had to pass through in this country in endeavouring to get back to something like that basis of economic stability from which we would be able to organise for defence in a major struggle, we simply could not have afforded it, either in finance, in the material in short supply, or in the manpower which would be retained in the Forces instead of being used in the great production effort for the economic recovery of the country.

It is true that the state of the Forces was almost bound in the general rundown to become unbalanced because of the fact that for the more than six years we were actually at war, there was in the case of the Air Force and the Army, really no regular recruitment. And, while we were going about our demobilisation in a good and orderly way—based not entirely upon a Labour Government scheme but on a scheme which had been worked out when the War Coalition Cabinet was in office—I am bound to admit that the pressure of financial circumstances in 1947 put upon us further need for economies and hastened the run-down which added to the unbalance of the Forces from then until quite recently.

The hon. and gallant Member for Carshalton (Brigadier Head) made a few caustic remarks. He is usually caustic in his remarks but I brush them on one side because I am most anxious in the present national and international circumstances to get the greatest measure of agreement possible upon what is necessary for saving the life of the country. That is my personal attitude at the present time. I may at times be highly controversial, and probably shall continue to be so, but when one is dealing with the kind of situation we are facing in Europe and in many other parts of the world today, I am anxious not to exacerbate feeling.

Brigadier Head I also do not wish to exacerbate feelings on this matter of defence, which should be a non-party matter, but the reason why my remarks are caustic is due to the complete lack of action from the right hon. Gentleman for which we have been calling for many months.

Mr. Alexander It depends upon whether the hon. and gallant Member considers he has at any time, the amount of information, either military or economic, which the Government have, and therefore is in a better position to be able to judge exactly how and when action should be taken. I do not accept that. Of course, the Government have to take

responsibility for whatever actions they take and for the time at which they actually take them. I do not want to have a quarrel tonight about this great question of defence, but I would say with regard to the reference of the hon. and gallant Member to what the Prime Minister said last Tuesday about the statement which was first made on 14th September and debated on 23rd September, that that was an announcement of what was being done in present circumstances to stop the uncoiling of the demobilisation spring, an operation to which the Armed Forces had been geared for the last two and a half years or more. Their great trouble had been that they had to go on uncoiling the spring in order that they might release the greatest amount of manpower, material and finance for the economic recovery of the country; and I, speaking at this Box tonight, declare that I am not sorry at all for what we have done in that direction.

Whatever may be said in this country in speeches or in articles, the general view of the world is that there is not a single country which suffered as we suffered in the war that has made anything like the efforts or achieved anything like the progress towards economic recovery that we have done. That has only been able to be accomplished because the Government have had to be prepared, in the period through which we have passed, to face the risks which were requisite and necessary for that purpose. But in September we took the first step, to say, "Well, the situation is growing more menacing and commitments which we might have expected by three years after the war would have been liquidated in Europe and the Middle East have not been so liquidated, and the basis therefore, upon which we had calculated our defence Forces has been changed." The first step, therefore, was to take some immediate action to prevent the uncoiling of the spring. The hon. and gallant Member thinks that we have been doing nothing by way of considering or planning from that point of view. He is quite wrong.

It is absolutely vital on so fundamental an issue that, whatever decision is finally taken—it will be taken and, I hope, very soon—as to what should be the steps with regard to National Service principle, practice and legislation, it should be such a decision as will carry the great majority of the country with us on that point; at such a time what is needed is to have the people of all classes behind us, taking into account what are both the economic and the military risks in the present situation.

The speech delivered by the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Woodford at Llandudno was in very great contrast on this matter to the recognition of the facts by his right hon. Friend, the Deputy-Leader of the Opposition, to whom he paid such a tribute today. I read with great interest the article in the "Daily Telegraph" of Tuesday, 5th October, by the right hon. Member for Warwick and Leamington (Mr. Eden). This passage, which echoed what I had been saying to the House two or three weeks earlier, is what struck me: "All this has to be fitted into our plans for economic recovery, and there will be little gain to Western Europe if, in our attempt to rearm, we dislocate our whole economic life. Indeed, this may be precisely the Soviet objective. The present phase of Soviet policies dates from the initiative of the Marshall Plan. The economic recovery of Europe and Soviet hopes go ill together." One of the great difficulties that confront not only the country as a whole, but the Government itself, in the executive decision it has to take, is to preserve the fine balance between defence requirements and economic needs both in manpower and finance. In this calculation it is not only the cost of remunerating the additional Forces, but also the productive possibilities of that manpower if left in industry, and the further diversion of manpower for the extra provision of material and equipment required for the maintenance of larger forces that have to be taken into account. There are dangers to be avoided on all sides in seeking the right decision on this issue. If we possibly can, in company with those who think and agree with us and are willing to unite with us, we must get the largest amount of collective security we can, basing it upon a regional foundation and expanding it from that, since we cannot get in the United Nations organisation that amount of overall agreement on collective security for which the Organisation was set up. Then we must make sure that what we devote to that collective military security does not so ruin the plan for the economic recovery of our own country and of Europe and of other parts of the world that the objectives of the Communist "cold" war can be achieved without their ever being required to fire a shot.

That is the real situation that we have to face today. On the other hand, I think the House may rest assured that the Government in office today are anxious to see that our security is ensured to the very maximum possible in the light of those circumstances. Under the Brussels Treaty, we have set up the Western union military, as well as economic, organisations, furthermore at the Paris Conference of Defence Ministers we were able to agree to follow up the creation of the permanent military committee and the Western Union Chiefs of Staff Committee by the appointment of commanders in chief who would be able at once to plan for collective action by the whole forces of the Five Powers. All this is an indication, initiated by this Government on behalf of this nation, of the strength of the intention of this Government on behalf of this country to work for our security and safety. By these means we shall endeavour to maintain through Europe—and, we hope, thereby through the World—those principles of liberty and democracy which have been at the root of our whole system here and upon which we have built such a great possibility of individual freedom within this State. That is the situation.

Mr. Blackburn (Birmingham, King's Norton) While agreeing entirely with what my right hon. Friend has said, will he agree, despite his remarks on the Llandudno speech, that the less we underestimate the effect of the atom bomb the less also we need divert from economic to military purposes?

Mr. Alexander I am bound to say that there is a great deal to be said for the view that we can feel in a position of lesser danger while the feeling is that the atom bomb is not against us, but with us. It would be quite foolish not to recognise a simple fact like that. On the other hand, let me make it quite clear also that the immediate danger lies in the onrush of the Communist menace, country by country, by methods of creating civil war and arming the workers in order to obtain power by local coups des mains and the rest. If this is allowed to go on then the very large equipment and very great forces maintained by the U.S.S.R. in more conventional weapons still remain a very powerful and a very great menace indeed. We have to remember that they probably have today between three million and four million men under arms, and an air force which is not without power and strength. As the hon. and gallant Member for Carshalton said, they may have certain vulnerable points, but he would be making a great mistake if he underestimated the power of the U.S.S.R. to do damage.

In the short time I have left, it would be right for me to try to answer some of the specific points which have been put to me. First, I turn to the speech of the hon. and gallant Member for Macclesfield (Air-Commodore Harvey). I am as interested as he is in the need for bringing all the encouragement we can to regular enlistment in the Forces. I know full well what need there is for stepping up recruitment in the Royal Air Force in which he personally is so interested. The provision of married quarters, to which he referred, is one of the most desirable methods of making conditions such as to attract the right type of recruit. I am glad to say that, although for some time we were very much handicapped by the need for allocating men and materials in the first years after the war to the general housing programme, we have now an equality of priority with other housing projects in the country, and the progress that is being made with the married quarters project is very encouraging indeed. In the course of the present financial year we have in this country provided 1,200 Service houses. We shall complete another 2,500 before the end of the financial year, and in the same time we have built about another 800 married quarters for troops overseas. We shall make every effort to step that up.

I do not disagree with the division which he made between the two types of warfare, but I do not think that he will wish me to express any detailed comment on tactics and strategy which must lie behind the view he expressed. Certainly, in view of what I have said about the economic position, I am bound to say that I agree that in the planning of our strength in the different arms of the Air Force we shall have to consider very carefully whether we can afford a really large tactical air force. I am in a great deal of agreement with what he said.

The hon. and gallant Member spoke of Transport Command as being too small. The very substantial number of planes engaged each day is a large part of overall strength of the Royal Air Force at the present time. Personally, I should like

to see it still larger. Its efficiency has proved to be undoubted and I was glad to hear the tribute which the hon. and gallant Member paid.

He also presented me with an opportunity of saying how much we appreciate two other things, and I am sure that the Secretary of State for Air will agree with me. The first is the service being rendered by some of the civil charter planes. Although up to now they have only been carrying a minority of the total tonnage carried, they have been doing a very good job. The second thing to which I would like to refer is how grateful the Government have been for the great help we have had by the replenishment of air crew personnel from Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. I think that shows a unity of purpose in this opposition to the growth of Communist aggression which is a very happy augury for the future of the Commonwealth.

The hon. and gallant Member struck a very sympathetic note in my heart when he talked about the fact that there were too many courses. As I look through my various lists, I find it is extraordinary, in this modern game of planning for warfare, how much can be put into courses. It is very essential that we should not allow any body of our officers or senior other ranks to be without knowledge of any new information which is to be had, or revised modern tactics, and we have to be careful how we cut them down. But I have made a note to see what I can say to some of the other people about it.

I would not like to commit myself on what he said about the final control of either the Royal Air Force Regiment or Anti-Aircraft Command. I expect that some of the soldiers would complain a little about his suggestion that the whole of Anti-Aircraft Command should go to the R.A.F. until we could work out a proper combination of what should be the role of the anti-aircraft and artillery, not only in static defence but as something which in modern warfare would be certain to need to be mobile in order to achieve proper defences. Of the shortages which he spoke about in centres in the R.A.F., some are known to me, and some will be covered by way of provision of spares in the new interim programme which I announced in September. I think the greatest difficulty on the point raised by the hon. and gallant Gentleman is that in the course of the run-down and state of unbalance we have often been very short of the particular grade of skilled mechanics to do certain jobs in regard to spares. That is a position in which we can only get improvement as we get better Regular recruitment.

I come to the remarks of the hon. and gallant Member for Petersfield (Sir G. Jeffreys) who made a long, detailed and technical speech. The more I thought about it, the more I thought that it was better suited to a Debate on the Army Estimates than to the general type of Debate which we have had today, although, of course, it was perfectly free and open to him to put his points today. I shall pass them on to the Secretary of State for War, but I ask the hon. and gallant Member to read his speech tomorrow and to see how much he finds that the two parts of it contradict each other. At one moment he wants everything in the way of defence, and then later he wants a Geddes Axe and all sorts of things to cut down the provision for the Forces and especially the services which provide amenities for the men concerned. I suggest that he read his speech tomorrow and that he will see then that what I am saying is true.

One of the points he mentioned was also raised by a number of other hon. Members. He referred to the subject, which we discussed in July and again in September, of pay and allowances and methods of dealing with hardships. I hope very much to be able to make an announcement upon that matter within a comparatively short space of time. From my point of view, the plan is already worked out. I am waiting for final decisions upon the point.

Sir G. Jeffreys I most specifically said that the economies I proposed were in connection with non-combatant or semi-combatant services.

Mr. Alexander I can find many instances to prove that a good many services described as non-combatant make a large contribution towards finally bringing efficiency to the combatant. I have not time to argue that point at length tonight. I come to the speech of the hon. Member for Kingston-upon-Thames (Mr. Boyd-Carpenter). He asked me about the

registration and emergency treatment of the people who have passed into Class Z reserve. I really do not think that at present we could contemplate the kind of overall registration and posting to units of the whole of the five million men, and I do not think that the hon. Member intended that that should actually be the case. However, I draw to his attention again the statement that was made in September about setting up a Special Reserve. That was finally explained by the Secretary of State For War at a Press Conference on 30th September. In that scheme we shall seek to get special classes for the three Services from the Class Z Reserve who will be registered and available at short notice whenever an emergency arises. I have not yet been able to get any report as to the response we have had to that first appeal, but I hope that it will be very successful in enabling us to build up what is required.

Mr. Boyd-Carpenter As I understand it, the only people who will appear on that register will be the people who take the initiative and apply. There will be no arrangements made for people who do not apply. Is that correct?

Mr. Alexander In the case of people who are required immediately, that is so. We shall work according to that registration. I would add that I said on 23rd September that we had overhauled the whole mobilisation machinery. That fact was stressed again in the answer given by the Secretary of State for War in the House the same night, when he spoke of what we were doing by way of groups and by way of posting men as they can best be fitted into each of the units. We have a plan well worked out in that respect. The Foreign Legion proposal was made by the hon. Member and also by the hon. and gallant Member for Carshalton. There will be a Question on the Order Paper next week on that topic. I have little time in which to deal with the matter at length now and I promise an answer next week.

I think I have already covered the point about the National Service Act. I assure hon. Members that the matter is under consideration and I hope that the decision of the Government will be made at a fairly early date. The point was made that there seemed to be no sense of urgency about this matter. I hope that when hon. Members read what I have had to say, they will not continue to accuse me of being lacking in urgency.

Perhaps the hon. and gallant Member for Chelsea (Commander Noble) will forgive me if I deal only with one main point that he raised. It is perfectly true that the Royal Navy in its reconstruction which has led to a position where it can expand steadily the number of its commissioned ships able to go to sea, was helped by the fact that it limited its intake of National Service men. The hon. and gallant Member can rest assured that the limit to which the Navy was brought down will not be the limit for the future. That is a point upon which I myself, as well as certain other people, happen to be particularly keen. I have already dealt with married quarters, pay and hardships which he mentioned. The hon. and gallant Member for Carshalton also raised the general question of recruitment for the Territorials. I am sorry that in this matter there has again been raised a little party feeling between one side and the other. I hope that in the general appeal which is now being made we shall be able to eliminate that party feeling. I want to get the very best possible response in order to build up our Territorial and other auxiliary forces.

I am not able tonight to give details of the improvement which has taken place since the first main appeal was launched on 1st October, but I understand that, although things were not going too well up to 30th September, there is an increased interest in the matter during October, and I am hoping for better results in consequence. It will have such an effect upon our general position that I hope that all those who wish to serve the country in the present state of possible emergency will answer the general call that has been made.

I want to say that I am perfectly certain, whatever may be said in the heat of speeches from time to time on the great question of peace or war, that there is no hon. Member of any party in the House who really wants war, and that, whatever steps we feel we have to take in order to deter aggression, no one wishes war to take place. On the other hand, I think we would be very guilty indeed if, having achieved after great sacrifices the preservation of our liberties, we did not at this time take all possible precautions which are within our resources and the resources of those who think and agree and will act with us, to see that the liberties for which we fought so dearly are maintained for all time.

Debate adjourned.—[Mr. Snow.]

Debate to be resumed Tomorrow.